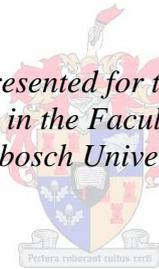


# **Faith formation of young people in an evangelical context: An empirical and theoretical investigation**

by

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*Dissertation presented for the degree of  
Doctor of Theology in the Faculty of Theology at  
Stellenbosch University*



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December 2014

## DECLARATION

I, the undersign, hereby declare that the content of this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously submitted it to any other university for a degree, either in part or in its entirety.

Signature:

Date:.....14 November 2014.....

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## ABSTRACT

This research study focussed on the faith formation of youth between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years old. An empirical and theoretical investigation into the ecclesial, familial and societal influences on the faith formation of this age group within the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa (EBCOSA) was conducted. The theoretical framework of practical theological interpretation aligned with four specific research tasks guided the researcher in stipulating the purpose of the research study under five core objectives. Empirical research was conducted by using interviews and focus groups as its core methodology.

A contextual analysis of the EBCOSA positioned this denomination within a post-apartheid South African context. This analysis discusses the foundation and history of the EBCOSA as an evangelical denomination within the context of Christianity in South Africa during the periods of colonization, apartheid and post-apartheid. A brief reflection on the state of youth in South Africa provides an understanding of youth ministry within this denomination. The influence that The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) has had on the EBCOSA's denominational structure, governance and theological framework is discussed with the intention of understanding how its youth ministry has developed over time and through different societal contexts into its present state. It is argued that this denomination has not taken the faith formation of its youth seriously. This is evidenced by the way in which youth ministry, along with its structures and leadership, has been neglected through lack of youth ministry foci in TEAM's ministerial succession plan for this denomination.

A theoretical investigation into the faith formation of youth between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years old serves as the nucleus of this research study. Key terms such as discipleship, spiritual growth and maturity and faith formation are explored. An understanding of faith as a process toward spiritual growth was selected as term most relevant to the EBCOSA context.

The research findings of this study reveal that the youth of EBCOSA were self-motivated and involved within the life of the church in the past. Leadership positions were considered something prized and worth attaining. The present youth are less interested in church life and its leadership positions. The reality is that the EBCOSA's problems have merged amidst a materialistic and compromising older generation. The church may be involved in the faith formation of its youth on an individual and local basis but this is not true on a corporate and

national level. The participants of this study understand faith formation as the on-going and consistent process evidenced through a Christ-like lifestyle. This study confirmed the value that music, Scripture memorization, visitation and interaction around Scripture have on the faith formation of youth. Having relational support from peers, pastors, youth leaders and family; having an attitude that is open to the reality of trials; understanding the difference between owning their faith and adherence to church practice was revealed as contributing factors to youth faith formation. Peer pressure linked to low self-image and an inability to confide in parents; feeling rejected by the church and God and the reality that even Christian parents can hinder their faith by not being consistent in the way they live at home and at church were revealed as hindrance factors to youth faith formation. Christians who pretend had a louder voice than a non-Christian family.

A practical theology on youth faith formation from an evangelical South African perspective in which a public practical theology addressing the daily concerns and issues of youth and missional approach to youth is proposed.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingstudie fokus op die geloofsvorming van die jeug tussen die ouderdomme van veertien en sewentien jaar oud. 'n Empiriese en teoretiese ondersoek is gedoen na die kerklike, familie en maatskaplike invloede op die geloofsvorming van hierdie ouderdomsgroep binne die Evangeliese Bybel Kerk van Suider-Afrika (EBCOSA). Die teoretiese raamwerk van praktiese teologiese interpretasie in lyn met vier spesifieke navorsingstake het die navorser gelei om die doel van die navorsingstudie onder vyf kern doelwitte te stipuleer. Empiriese navorsing is gedoen deur die gebruik van onderhoude en fokusgroepe as die hoof metodologie.

'n Kontekstuele analise van die EBCOSA het hierdie denominasie binne 'n post-apartheid Suid-Afrikaanse konteks posisioneer. Hierdie analise ondersoek die grondslag en geskiedenis van die EBCOSA as 'n evangeliese denominasie binne die konteks van die Christelike geloof in Suid-Afrika gedurende die tydperk van kolonisasie, apartheid en post-apartheid. 'n Kort refleksie oor die stand van die jeug in Suid-Afrika bied 'n verstaan van die jeugbediening binne hierdie denominasie. Die invloed wat die Evangeliese Alliansie Mission (TEAM) op die EBCOSA se kerklike struktuur, bestuur en teologiese raamwerk gehad het, is bespreek met die doel om te verstaan hoe die jeugbediening met verloop van tyd en deur verskillende sosiale kontekste tot sy huidige toestand ontwikkel het. Daar word argumenteer dat hierdie kerk nie die geloofsvorming van sy jeug ernstig opgeneem het nie. Dit word bewys deur die manier waarop jeugbediening, saam met sy strukture en leierskap, verwaarloos is deur 'n gebrek van jeugbediening fokuspunkte in TEAM se bedienings opvolgingsplan vir hierdie denominasie.

'n Teoretiese ondersoek na die geloofsvorming van die jeug tussen die ouderdomme van veertien en sewentien dien as die kern van hierdie navorsing. Sleutel terme soos dissipelskap, geestelike groei en volwassenheid en geloofsvorming word ondersoek. 'n Verstaan van geloof as 'n proses in die rigting van geestelike groei is gekies as die meeste relevant vir die EBCOSA konteks.

Die bevindinge van hierdie studie toon dat die jeug van EBCOSA voorheen self-gemotiveerd en betrokke in die lewe van die kerk was. Leierskap posisies was beskou as iets om na te streef en die moeite werd om te bereik. Die huidige jeug is minder geïnteresseerd in die lewe van die kerk en leierskap posisies. Die werklikheid is dat die EBCOSA se probleme saamgesmelt het te midde van 'n materialistiese en skikkende ouer geslag. Die kerk mag

betrokke wees in die geloofsvorming van sy jeug op 'n individuele en plaaslike vlak, maar dit is nie waar op 'n korporatiewe en nasionale vlak nie. Die deelnemers van hierdie studie verstaan geloofsvorming as die deurlopende en volgehoue proses wat bewys word deur 'n Christus-tipe leefstyl. Hierdie studie het die waarde wat musiek, Skrif memorisering, besoeke en interaksie rondom die Skrif op die geloofsvorming van die jeug het bevestig. Om relasionele ondersteuning van die portuurgroep, pastore, jeugleiers en familie te hê; om 'n houding te hê wat oop is vir die werklikheid van beproewing; begrip van die verskil tussen die besit van hul geloof en die nakoming van kerklike praktyk is geopenbaar as bydraende faktore tot die jeug se geloofsvorming. Groepsdruk gekoppel aan 'n lae selfbeeld en 'n onvermoë om ouers in vertrou te kan neem; die gevoel van verwerping deur die kerk en God en die werklikheid dat selfs Christelike ouers hul geloof verhinder deur nie konsekwent te wees in die manier waarop hulle leef by die huis en die kerk nie is aan die lig gebring as hindernis faktore in die jeug se geloofsvorming. Christene wat voorgee het 'n harder stem as 'n nie-Christelike familie.

'n Praktiese teologie op die geloofsvorming van die jeug van 'n evangeliese Suid-Afrikaanse perspektief waarin 'n openbare praktiese teologie die daaglikse bekommernisse en probleme van die jeug en missionale benadering tot die jeug aanspreek word voorgestel.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the youth and leadership of the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa. Thank you for sharing a very fragile space with me. My hope is that this resource would assist you in addressing the challenges you are experiencing with regards to your youth ministry.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral study has truly been a communal effort. There have been many voices supporting, encouraging and praying for me on my research journey. I will not be able to mention these individually due to spatial constraints but you each know who you are.

God has truly been gracious! Without him this dissertation and career path would be impossible. Thank you Lord for the confirmation of my calling to youth ministry through this tough learning and growth process. Thank you for the support structures you lead my way. Thank you for completion of this season and the beginning of the next.

To my family; Brandon, Shannon (6) and Ashleigh (3): You have seen me at my best and at my worst; thank you for being patient, sharing my joys and my tears, and for trying to understand in your own way; you are amazing! As for my girls, mommy has been studying for as long as you are alive, I pray that the next leg of our journey would be more attentive, less grumpy and playful. Brandon, without your love and support, this study would have been stopped a long time ago. Thank you for teaching me perseverance and appreciation of the season I find myself in.

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God is indeed gracious!

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION .....	I
ABSTRACT .....	II
OPSOMMING .....	IIV
DEDICATION .....	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VII
LIST OF ADDENDA .....	XIV
LIST OF TABLES, DIAGRAMS AND FIGURES.....	XV
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of this study .....	4
1.2.1 A historical perspective .....	4
1.3 Motivation for the research study .....	8
1.4 Research problem and question .....	9
1.4.1 Research problem .....	9
1.4.2 Research question.....	11
1.5 Theoretical Framework.....	12
1.6 Purpose of the research study.....	16
1.7 Research design and methodology.....	16
1.7.1 Research design .....	17
1.7.2 Research methodology .....	18
1.7.3 Method of data analysis .....	18
1.7.4 Data collection process.....	19
1.8 Ethical considerations .....	23
1.9 Theological nature of this research study.....	25
1.10 Delimitations of this research study .....	26
1.11 Overview of chapters .....	27
1.12 Terms relevant to this study .....	31
1.13 Conclusion .....	33

<b>CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVANGELICAL BIBLE CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (EBCOSA)</b> .....	<b>35</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	35
2.2 The foundation and history of the EBCOSA in South Africa .....	36
2.2.1 Brief history of the South African church .....	37
2.2.2 Foundation of the EBCOSA as part of the South African church .....	40
2.3 EBCOSA's structure, governance and theological framework .....	44
2.3.1 EBCOSA's structure and governance .....	46
2.3.1.1 Type of congregation that the EBCOSA embodies .....	46
2.3.1.3 The EBCOSA's Constitution.....	50
2.3.2 Theological framework of the EBCOSA .....	51
2.3.2.1 Foundational Beliefs .....	52
2.3.2.2 Terms relevant to faith development .....	54
2.4 Youth ministry within EBCOSA .....	59
2.4.1 History and Development of youth ministry in EBCOSA .....	60
2.4.2 Present state of Youth ministry in EBCOSA .....	65
2.5 Conclusion .....	68
<b>CHAPTER 3: A THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONCEPT OF FAITH FORMATION</b> .....	<b>70</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	70
3.2 Key terms relevant to faith formation .....	72
3.2.1 Toward a working definition of 'faith' .....	72
3.2.2 Towards a working definition of 'spiritual' .....	78
3.2.3 Discipleship .....	81
3.2.4 Spiritual Growth/ Spiritual maturity .....	84
3.2.5 Faith Formation .....	89
3.2.5.1 Traditional theological perspectives on faith formation .....	91
3.2.5.2 Common modes of faith formation.....	96
3.3 Faith in the life of 14- 17 year old youth .....	101
3.3.1 Key theories relevant to understanding faith of 14-17 year old.....	103
3.3.1.1 Identity development .....	103
3.3.1.2 Moral development .....	108
3.3.1.3 Faith Development.....	113
3.3.2 Influential factors in the faith formation of 14-17 years old youth .....	121
3.3.2.1 The role of the family .....	122
3.3.2.2 The role of the faith community .....	124
3.3.2.3 The role of culture and society.....	129
3.5 Conclusion .....	132
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: EMPIRICAL STUDY CONDUCTED WITHIN THE EVANGELICAL BIBLE CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA</b> .....	<b>135</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	135

4.2	Reflection on the research problem and question .....	136
4.2.1	The research problem .....	136
4.2.2	The research question .....	137
4.3	Reflection on the research process .....	138
4.3.1	Data analysis process .....	142
4.3.1.1	Plan for data analysis .....	143
4.3.1.2	Familiarize yourself with the data .....	143
4.3.1.3	Generate initial codes .....	145
4.3.1.4	Search for themes .....	151
4.3.1.5	Review themes .....	152
4.3.1.6	Define and name themes .....	153
4.3.1.7	Write the report .....	154
4.3.2	Challenges experienced during the empirical process .....	154
4.3.2.1	Transcriptions .....	154
4.3.2.1.1	Non-verbal language in transcriptions .....	154
4.3.2.1.2	Quality of transcriptions .....	154
4.3.2.2	Change in the size of the sample .....	155
4.4	Analysis and evaluation of research findings .....	155
4.4.1	Faith formation within the EBCOSA according to the research findings .....	156
4.4.1.1	Category 1: The context out of which the research problem was born .....	156
4.4.1.1.1	Youth ministry in EBCOSA in the past (theme 1.1) .....	157
4.4.1.1.2	Youth ministry in EBCOSA at present (theme 1.2) .....	160
4.4.1.1.3	The EBCOSA's involvement in the faith development of youth (theme 1.3) .....	166
4.4.1.2	Category 2: Participants' responses to the research problem .....	168
4.4.1.2.1	Being a Christian is... (theme 2.1) .....	168
4.4.1.2.2	Faith development is... (theme 2.2) .....	171
4.4.1.2.4	Factors that hinder faith development of 14-17 years old youth (theme 2.4) .....	188
4.4.1.2.5	Opinions on personal growth (theme 2.5) .....	197
4.4.1.3	Category 3: Participants suggestions on how to address the research problem .....	201
4.4.1.3.1	Development (theme 3.1) .....	201
4.4.1.3.2	Structures that need to be put in place (theme 3.2) .....	202
4.4.1.3.3	Activities (theme 3.3) .....	203
4.4.2	Summary/Discussion .....	205
4.5	Conclusion .....	210
 <b>CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF YOUTH FAITH FORMATION WITHIN AN EVANGELICAL SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT .....</b>		<b>211</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	211
5.2	Comparative studies concerning youth faith formation within practical theology .....	212
5.3	Summative discussion of comparative study .....	220
5.4	Implications of the research findings: .....	224
5.4.1	The EBCOSA .....	224
5.4.1.1	A broader Protestant evangelical perspective .....	224
5.4.1.2	A dispensational fundamentalistic theological paradigm .....	226
5.4.1.3	Ecclesial Praxis .....	228
5.4.2	For Practical theology .....	236
5.4.3	Youth ministry among evangelicals in South Africa .....	239

5.5	Conclusion .....	241
<b>CHAPTER 6: PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY .....</b>		<b>244</b>
6.1	Introduction.....	244
6.2	Practical implications of this research study .....	244
6.2.1	The contextual implications for the EBCOSA .....	245
6.2.1.1	A context for Evangelical fundamentalism .....	245
6.2.1.2	Lack of corporate and national EBCOSA involvement.....	245
6.2.1.3	Detrimental effects of a dualistic approach to Christianity .....	245
6.2.1.4	Youth leadership in EBCOSA.....	246
6.2.2	The ecclesial implications for evangelical faith communities in South Africa.....	246
6.2.2.1	The importance of identity, moral and faith development theories .....	246
6.2.2.2	Influential factors on faith formation.....	246
6.2.2.1.1	Factors that enhance young people’s faith .....	247
6.2.2.1.2	Factors that hinder young people’s faith .....	247
6.2.2.3	The importance of an older generation.....	247
6.2.2.4	The importance of diverse voices .....	248
6.2.2.5	The importance of costly sacrifice.....	248
6.2.2.6	The importance of the young people’s faith stories.....	248
6.2.2.7	Young people are open to other religions.....	248
6.2.3	Academic implications for faith formation studies .....	248
6.2.3.1	Faith as a process toward spiritual growth .....	248
6.2.3.2	Faith formation is aimed at Christlikeness .....	249
6.2.3.3	Faith development is only one aspect of faith formation.....	249
6.2.3.4	The relationship between identity, morality and faith .....	249
6.2.3.5	Moral formation as integral to faith formation .....	250
6.3	Limitations of this research study .....	250
6.4	Recommendations from this research study.....	250
6.4.1	To the EBCOSA .....	251
6.4.1.1	The need for transformational leadership .....	251
6.4.1.2	The need for relevant biblical teaching .....	251
6.4.1.3	Create opportunities for spiritual growth.....	252
6.4.1.4	Agreement as to the state of youth ministry in EBCOSA .....	252
6.4.1.5	The need for relevant youth ministry structures .....	252
6.4.1.6	Inclusion of youth ministry in the EBCOSA constitution .....	253
6.4.1.7	Develop youth mentorship .....	253
6.4.1.8	Re-dress Generation X .....	253
6.4.1.9	Develop relevant modes of faith formation .....	253
6.4.1.10	The need for the inculturation of youth faith formation processes .....	254
6.4.2	For youth ministry within an evangelical South African context .....	254
6.4.2.1	Familiarity with what the South African government has implemented .....	254
6.4.2.2	Contextualize Christian education.....	255
6.4.2.3	Professionalization of youth work .....	255
6.4.3	For further research.....	256
6.4.3.1	Further exploration of the modes of faith formation .....	256
6.4.3.2	Further exploration of each of the influential factors on youth faith formation .....	257
6.4.3.3	The correlation of African traditional practices with the faith formation modes .....	257
6.5	Conclusion .....	257

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY.....	259
7.1 Introduction.....	259
7.1.1 Reflection on the research problem & question.....	259
7.1.2 Reflection the research objectives .....	260
7.2 Plan for the dissemination of the research results of this study .....	261
7.3 Conclusion .....	261
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 264
 ADDENDUM A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH.....	 281
 ADDENDUM B: TEAM CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE OF CONFORMITY TO THE APARTHEID PHILOSOPHY.....	 283
 ADDENDUM C: LETTER FROM MR. ADAM JOHANNESSEN TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL AND ANNUAL .....	 284
 ADDENDUM D: LETTER FROM REV. A JACOBS AND L SAVILLE – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH .....	 285
 ADDENDUM E: LIST OF EBCOSA CONGREGATIONS .....	 287
 ADDENDUM F: LETTER OF PERMISSION OBTAINED FROM THE EBCOSA FOR BEING USED AS THE CASE STUDY.....	 288
 ADDENDUM I: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THIS RESEARCH STUDY (TO THE EBCOSA).....	 289
 ADDENDUM J: LETTER OF PROGRESS OF RESEARCH STUDY SENT TO THE EBCOSA.....	 291
 ADDENDUM K: COMPARISON OF FIRST AND REVISED QUESTIONNAIRES USED (PRIOR TO AND AFTER THE PILOT STUDY) .....	 292
 ADDENDUM L: COMPARISON OF FIRST AND REVISED FOCUS GROUP PROCEDURE (PRIOR TO AND AFTER THE PILOT STUDY) .....	 302
 ADDENDUM M: INFORMATION LEAFLET USED DURING PILOT STUDY FOCUS GROUP .....	 304

## **LIST OF ADDENDA**

- A. Ethical clearance certificate from the University of Stellenbosch
- B. TEAM confession and repentance of conformity to the apartheid philosophy.
- C. Letter from Mr. Adam Johanneson to the National Council and Annual Conference; calling for the inclusion of a framework or guidelines for youth ministry in the EBCOSA Constitution.
- D. Letter from Rev. A Jacobs and L Saville – Recommendations for youth ministry
- E. List of EBCOSA congregations
- F. Letter of permission obtained from the EBCOSA for being used as the case study.
- G. Letter requesting permission to conduct this research study (to the EBCOSA).
- H. Letter of progress of research study sent to the EBCOSA
- I. Comparison of first and revised questionnaires used (prior to and after the pilot study)
- J. Comparison of first and revised focus group procedure (prior to and after the pilot study)
- K. Information leaflet used during pilot study focus group

## LIST OF TABLES, DIAGRAMS AND FIGURES

Table 1	Representation of codes used in this study
Table 2	Tabular illustration of transcription coding
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Diagram 1	Governance structure of the EBCOSA
Diagram 2	Process of spiritual maturity as adhered to by EBCOSA
<hr/>	
Figure 1	Tabular Representation of transcription data for level 1 coding
Figure 2	Illustration of mind map according to participants verbatim responses
Figure 3	Illustration of mind map according to colour-coded themes
Figure 4	Illustration of thematic map

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

This research study is positioned within the discipline of practical theology with specific focus on youth ministry. Gerben Heitink (1999:6), a dutch practical theologian, described practical theology as a theory of action focussed on the empirically orientated theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society. As an academic discipline, it is an empirically descriptive and critically constructive theory of religious practice. Heitink believed that Christianity is not limited to the church, so practical theology should address ecclesial practices, religious aspects of culture and society as well as the spiritual dimension of individual life. The interconnectedness of these three focus areas arose from concern for the praxis of church and faith with the aim on renewed action. In this empirically descriptive and critically constructive framework, practical theology pursues an interdisciplinary approach to evaluating and improving the existing forms of religious practice (Heitink, 1999: xi-xvi). This perspective of practical theology developed in the late 1960's when societal authority was being challenged. Parental and church authority was included to the extent that church attendance dropped and many schisms between conservative and liberal Christians developed (Heitink, 1999:3-4). In his book, *Battle for a generation*, Ron Hutchcraft (1996:15- 16) describes this period as one in which there was a loss of authority during which many youth challenged authority and also heeded any new teaching. The discipline of practical theology sought to address the realities people were facing during this time. It was aimed at describing, analysing and interpreting the realities people faced and in doing so became an empirically focussed discipline. Don Browning, an American practical theologian, defines practical theology as critical reflection on the church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation (in<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer & Van der Ven 1999:54). Practical theology is aimed at developing pastoral instruments and teaching clergy how to use these (Van der Ven, 1993:35). These instruments are not only skills but include knowledge, understanding and attitudes. Practical theology creates spaces of communication between the Christian faith and other faiths at work within the world. This creates a hermeneutic-communicative praxis (ibid:

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<sup>1</sup> The original source of this reference is an Interdisciplinary Issue which is compiled within *Practical Theology: International Perspectives* by Van der Ven & Schweitzer, 1999).

39-41). This means that all functions of the church (including kerygma, liturgy, koinonia, diacony to youth) take this interaction seriously. Practical theology is reflection on human action within the church and society but it is also theological reflection on God's distinct and unique act of revelation within history and humanity. It is reflection on both human and divine action, discerning and articulating ways that faith communities can respond to God's action (in Schweitzer & Van der Ven, 1999:359-362). Practical theology studies those moments, contexts, situations and practices in which God's action intersects with human action transforming it into something holy and life-giving. These moments, contexts, situations and practices are relevant to youth ministry as well.

Practical theology is at the heart of youth ministry (Dean & Root 2011: 17). It gives youth ministry the language and direction to describe how youth construct their faith. It releases youth leaders from the challenge of knowing it all. It reminds them that ministry outside of this framework of understanding lends itself to hindering the faith formation of these youth more than helping them. As with practical theology, youth ministry requires relationships and Christian education, not only one at the expense of the other. Understood as a theological discipline, youth ministry takes the faith formation of youth seriously because these youth are called to participate in every practice of Christian ministry (ibid: 20-21). Youth ministry then, is the call of the church to relationally pass on the gospel to youth (Dean, et al 2001:19 & 42).

Postmodern youth are deeply spiritual (Mueller, 2006:107 & Powell, et al, 2011: 60). The problem is that these youth do not adhere to any one particular faith group. They want to be able to choose from a variety of faith systems and make up their own. Many youth have become disillusioned by orthodox Christianity in which rules are seen as the final authority. In fact, these youth do not call themselves religious yet at the root of their pluralism and relativism, postmodern youth have a deep hunger for God. It is for this reason that congregations need to do all possible to engage these youth, helping them understand the meaning of the delinquent behaviours they are involved in and pointing them to the redemptive and transformative message of the cross (ibid: 107-108). An understanding of youth faith formation will benefit the church, family and society by helping these groups address the questions, behaviour, attitudes and faith of its youth better. This understanding will also help guide these youth appropriately (where they find themselves and not where they

are meant to be). It will help youth understand that the Christian faith does allow mistakes and doubts and that these can be discussed in open and safe contexts.

James Fowler (1987), a practical theologian reputable for his foundational work on faith developmental theory, identified three aspects of faith namely; faith as believing, faith as trusting and faith as doing. John Westerhoff (1980) called this (adding one more aspect) experience, affiliation, searching and owned faith. In each of these faith development stages, youth require appropriate guidance. During the early teenage years for example, they experience affiliative faith. They have faith to search and discover but this faith must still be grounded in reality (practice). They want to see church and not merely ritualized practices. Their thoughts about faith are constantly changing. They now see themselves in the story of faith instead of just knowing the story. It is now that the faith community needs to help them feel a sense of belonging. If this does not happen they feel alienated towards God as well. They need to be empowered by learning what their skills, talents & spiritual gifts are so that they are able to contribute to ministry. The faith community needs to celebrate all the ways in which they are able to participate. (The different stages described here will be elaborated on in chapter three of this dissertation)

The focus of this study is on the faith formation process of fourteen to seventeen years old youth. Faith formation is not a new area of research (in theology and other disciplines) and therefore this study is conducted in a specific context. The context of this research study is a Protestant evangelical denomination within post-apartheid South Africa. This context necessitates a brief reflection on ecclesial developments alongside the political changes in this country, as relevant to the foundation of this denomination and also a brief discussion concerning youth in South Africa.

This chapter serves as an introduction to a research study focussed on the ecclesial, familial and societal influence on the faith formation of young people within the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa ((hereafter referred to as EBCOSA). It begins by giving the motivation for the research study, thereafter proceeding to the research problem and question investigated. The theoretical framework upon which this dissertation is based is explained. The purpose and research design and methodology of the research study is also discussed in

this chapter. Certain ethical considerations are warranted for a study of this nature which has minors as its focus group. These are mentioned. The theological nature and also delimitations of this research study are discussed here as well. The chapter concludes by giving the reader an overview of chapters anticipated as well as important terms used in this dissertation.

## 1.2 Background of this study

Youth faith formation cannot be discussed apart from the societal or cultural contexts in which the youth exist. Various modern youth ministry models in which churches were intensively involved have given way to faith-based organisations. Mark Senter (2001: 2) argues that the church needs to first deal with the missiological and theological issues regarding youth ministry before it can tackle the sociological issues mentioned earlier. He emphasizes spiritual health as a means of coping with life's pressures and that faith formation influences all of our being, our work, our education, social and sexual lives. Early missional efforts to the EBCOSA adopted education as a model through which they ministered the gospel to youth. This model is not continued within the present EBCOSA governance structures with respect to local youth ministries. At present, holistic faith formation is not emphasized in ministry to youth within this denomination. This research study investigates faith development within the EBCOSA and seeks to enhance the faith formation practices affecting the youth of this denomination. The premise of this study is that an understanding of the faith of youth between the ages of 14 and 17 within their specific developmental stages will empower and enhance the church's faith formation praxis to this group.

### 1.2.1 A historical perspective

The youth of South Africa were very active in the apartheid struggle of this country. The National Youth League was formed under the African National Congress in 1943. In the 1960's these youth reacted to the political oppression and injustices (education, unemployment, poor living conditions, etc.) of the country by heading up mass revolts against the government in power which culminated at the Soweto uprising in 1976. The youth in these early times adhered to a culture of comrades rather than the current culture plighted by drugs, crime, sex, and so forth. These youth were acting on behalf of youth as a collective in the country and not due to selfish ambitions as is many times the case at present (Thesnaar, 2003:9-11). Thesnaar (ibid: 14) reports that most youth who were killed, arrested, placed

under restriction orders, tortured and those who left the country were between the ages of thirteen and twenty-four. He adds that gangsterism among youth emerged in the early 1980's when the political parties were banned.

Research conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry and Joint Enrichment Project in 1993 is reported on by Morrow, Panday and Ritcher (2005). This report contests the concept of a 'lost generation' and their investigation of the social factors affecting South African young people, showed that these youth were highly religious with only 9% never attending church at all. More than half (53%) of the younger age category, aged from sixteen to twenty years old, attended church once a week or more. This study also found that youth below the age of 19 years were three times more likely to be involved in a church or a sports club than in political organisations (Morrow, et al, 2005:5).

Ten years later, the Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) Status of Youth Report conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2003; classified South Africa as a young country in which nearly 40% of its people are between fourteen and thirty-five years of age. Youth in South Africa are therefore not an obscure sub-culture but a very large part of the South African population (ibid: 3). This report found that more than two-thirds of South Africans between the ages of 18 and 35 are unemployed, about 551 000 youth drop out of school between Grade 1 and Grade 11 per year and approximately 170 000 Grade 12 students fail the Senior Certificate examination every year, and 290 000 pass, 3.6 per cent of youth (predominantly coloured and black) had a disability, 42% of young people said they have never drunk alcohol, 13% have used a recreational drug, 50% are more likely to report having used a condom at first sex, one in ten young people reported knowing someone who died of AIDS, more than 20% had been threatened with a gun or knife, more than 12% had been assaulted and injured with weapons of this kind and more than 10 000 young people kill themselves each year (ibid:7-9, 19, 24). It also found that career guidance programmes in public schools were weak and, given their history of isolation and disadvantage during the apartheid regime, family and social networks in most black (and coloured) families and communities tended to be inexperienced in giving advice on career and business opportunities. Many young people in South Africa, particularly those from poor backgrounds, were still at school into their early 20s (ibid: 7-9, 19). This report found that religious affiliation and practice was an important aspect of the social participation of many young

people. Those who were active in some form of organisation, whether it was a youth club, a church or cultural or sports group, were less likely to fall through the cracks in society and engage in risky and self-destructive behaviour. By 2004, the top three organisations (ranked in order) to which youth belonged were church, sports, and youth clubs (Swartz, 2004:11).

A later (2008) <sup>2</sup>study by the South African National Youth Risk Behaviour survey confirmed an increase in the above-mentioned statistics.<sup>3</sup> Several youth legislative policy frameworks such as the National Youth Commission (NYC), Act No. 19 of 1996; the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2000 and the National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYDPF) 2002/2007 were undertaken to address the above mentioned challenges facing South African youth.<sup>4</sup> Through organizations like the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the National Youth Leagues (NYL), and the South African Youth Council (SAYC), South Africa stresses the importance of the empowering and development of youth in efforts to avoid the destructive behavioural patterns listed above.<sup>5</sup>

In 2009 skills development, further and higher education were brought together under the purview of the national Department of Higher Education and Training to create more avenues through which access to education could occur. Despite these efforts, an unacceptably high proportion of young people who could be involved in some form of post-school study are not. Failure to complete secondary school is, however, substantial, especially amongst Africans and Coloureds.<sup>6</sup> Many resources such as life-skills programs, increased funding for tertiary study, job creation training institutions, employment and entrepreneurial

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<sup>2</sup> This is the most recent statistic from this study available. This unit is part of the Medical Research Council and was headed by principal investigator Professor Priscilla Reddy.

<sup>3</sup> 15% of South African youth have carried a weapon; 19% were a member of a gang; 46% were using drugs; 21% had committed one or more suicide attempts; 21.1% were current smokers, 30% were sexually active (of which 13% were under 13); 50% had consumed alcohol; 36% had been bullied; 21% had been in a physical fight 8% were underweight; 20% were overweight and 29% had spent longer than three hours daily watching TV or playing computer games ([www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)). Reflecting on the increasing rate of cohabitation and premarital sex amongst South African youth, Mashua (2011:3) confirms the increase in sexual activity and teenage pregnancy amongst youth. He adds that these youth get involved in these activities due to peer pressure resulting in many young girls end up dropping out of school.

<sup>4</sup> Four pillars upon which the national youth policy (2009-2014) proposes specific interventions for these youth are education; health and wellbeing; economic participation and social cohesion (n.a, 2009:2).

<sup>5</sup> The World Programme of Action on Youth (2000) was a 10 year plan aimed at effectively addressing the problems (education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure time activities, girls and women and The full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making) of young people (n.a, 2009:10).

<sup>6</sup> In higher education, the participation rate increased from almost 12% in 1994/5 to nearly 16% in 2007.

skills are being prioritized so that youth who were previously disadvantaged (according to the four pillars above) have a better life financially and materially. Many non-profit, public benefit and faith based organizations have become involved in these efforts.

Faith-based organizations such as the Christian Youth Movement; Youth for Christ and Scripture Union<sup>7</sup> assist churches in sharing the gospel with youth and discipling them. Efforts have been made to teach youth life-skills in schools to enhance their Christian service in the world. There seems to be a rise in the number of faith-based organizations focused on youth development (Swart, et al, 2010:1-13). Churches are more involved in assisting and rehabilitating youth. These are only three out of the many faith based organizations (such as Badisa, Kuyasa, The Warehouse, etc.) active in South Africa assisting the church and government in addressing the spiritual and social needs of youth but these will not all be elaborated on here. A brief reflection on Christian and government efforts towards youth development allows the reader to understand the context in which the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa ministers.

The EBCOSA was founded by The Evangelical Alliance Mission (hereafter referred to as TEAM) during the early 1950's. TEAM is an interdenominational mission agency with strong emphasis on church planting (Matham, 2002: 3). The EBCOSA is a predominantly coloured denomination with thirty-three congregations in South Africa, an additional two in Zimbabwe and one in Swaziland. Youth ministry was not a focal point of missionary outreach when starting this denomination. Children and youth were taught the gospel as a by-product of their educational development and while they responded to this gospel, they were mainly seen as the way to reaching adults (parents). The societal context of a congregation influences

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<sup>7</sup>The Christian Youth Movement (CYM) was established at a founding youth congress in 1995. These mass gatherings of young people, officially delegated by local branches, as well as church council members and ministers, are characterised by concentrated times of worship, small-group biblical reflection, contextual analysis and debate. This movement has been integral in youth development in South Africa because it has enabled young people to reflect on what it means to be Christian and young in the church within a South African context (Nel, 2010: 6). Scripture Union South Africa is part of an international, inter-denominational, non-profit organisation birthed in London in 1867. It is also a youth movement focussed on relational, contextual evangelism to non-Christian youth. It aims at developing whole young people who are balanced in their spiritual, social, mental and physical growth. It is based on the belief that these young people who will shape the future of South Africa. Youth for Christ was established in South Africa in the mid 1940's. Its purpose is the similar to that of Scripture Union with four core pillars as its driving force; godliness in lifestyle, devotion to the Word of God and prayer, passion for sharing the love of Christ and commitment to social involvement.

its local practices, values and habits as a faith community.<sup>8</sup> The faith formation of the youth in the EBCOSA is influenced by its context. This research study will investigate the faith formation of youth between the ages of 14 and 17 by using the EBCOSA as a focused case in this regard.

### 1.3 Motivation for the research study

In his Three Worlds Framework, Johann Mouton (2001:137-142) describes world one as the world of everyday life and lay knowledge in which people's daily experiences are taken seriously. The author was a member (born into) and leader in the EBCOSA hence this congregation being the focus of the present study. It is a fast growing concern that many youth have visited the church and experienced personal conversion but have struggled to grow and mature in their faith. This may be due to a lack of support from the influential structures in their lives of which congregational leadership and family are two. These young people's lives are also influenced by their peers and families. It would be naïve of the church not to take this reality seriously.

Another important consideration is the community and societal context out of which this study was born. The youth discussed in this dissertation form part of a broader South African youth ministry and developmental context. It has been this researcher's experience that youth leaders and parents in this denomination do not know how to deal with youth who face the societal challenges common to many youth in this country (drugs, pre-marital sex, limited access to adequate education, joblessness).

Mouton (2001:137-142) describes World two as the world of science and scientific research. Here knowledge from academia is taken into account as the researcher becomes a theologian reflecting on relevant theories, concepts, methodologies and the research process. My academic interest in practical theology and more specifically, youth ministry and pastoral

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<sup>8</sup> Professor Jurgens Hendriks (2004:76-79), a practical theologian who has researched congregations in Africa quite extensively, notes three levels at which this influence can occur. At macro level, a congregation is globally influenced by things like world trade market, global trends in society and the church. At meso level, it is nationally influenced by government policies, developmental agencies, community activities, and so forth. At micro level, a congregation is influenced by the people, events and policies within its immediate surroundings. In the case of the EBCOSA, this could be its national or regional councils and its leadership.

care has progressively developed from frequent verbal concern expressed by the church, parents and youth experienced whilst being actively involved in ministry with youth. As a practical theologian, my developing understanding of practical theology<sup>9</sup> connects these concerns to youth ministry as an academic discipline. As discussed earlier, research into faith formation is not novel. I have however found that most research in the area of youth ministry has stemmed from international research (United Kingdom and United States). It was my intention to investigate the practical relevance thereof for an evangelical South African context.

## 1.4 Research problem and question

### 1.4.1 Research problem

Historical accounts of the church often refer to youth as excluded from faith discourses only to be included at a later age (Ward, 1996:156 - 158; Nel, 1998:59). As noted earlier, South African youth are facing various challenges. There is increasing pressure on the church and its leadership to develop strategies for youth ministry that would meet the depth of needs these youth encounter. One of the challenges facing the EBCOSA is its decline in the number of youth it has in the denomination. Another challenge has been the decline in youth leadership and congregational youth ministries. Out of thirty-three churches nationally, only thirteen congregations have youth ministries.<sup>10</sup> Most of these are led by the local pastor, leaving the added load of the youth ministry to him and a few youth leaders and not the church which resulted in the cessation of many of the early-day youth activities. These constraints have resulted in the EBCOSA not taking the faith formation of its youth into careful consideration for its youth ministry. Academics have been researching this decrease in youth presence in the church from different perspectives. Pete Ward (1996:156 - 158) reflects on the concept of ‘church as family’ from an English perspective (United Kingdom) in trying to understand why young people have felt excluded from the church. He says that;

For many young people without a church background the way that we worship and the cultural norms of the church community are a serious stumbling –block... (this) leaves these young people with a clear choice: fit in with our way of doing things or leave...(t)he problem with being a family is that it sets a very clear order of priorities. Family members tend to come above

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<sup>9</sup> Practical theology and definitions thereof is a broad academic discipline and is connected to different time-frames in which it was researched. This dissertation in no way aims at discussing the extent thereof. The connection of practical theology to youth ministry is found beneficial to this dissertation.

<sup>10</sup> This was discovered during the empirical research process in April 2012.

those who are outside the family. The children of family members are seen as more important, or in need of being cared for first. The family emphasis of the church means that it is important to be 'accepted' as part of the family. Such acceptance is the gateway to Christian care and nurture. The problem comes, however, when people who are socially unacceptable seek entry to the church or to the youth group. The family feel of the church in this instance is more likely to move people to protect vulnerable family members from a perceived threat. In these ways the feel of the modern church has served to isolate Christian youth work and keep it 'in the family'.

Youth ministry within the EBCOSA has not focussed on helping youth think theologically because it has viewed these youth as consumers of theology rather than people who help construct religious discourse. Youth have been placed as the subjects of ministry and not partners in theological discussions and the manner in which ministry is done within congregations. This approach to youth ministry has resulted in youth being dependent on others for their faith formation and not taking responsibility for their faith (Dean, et al, 2001:30-31).

The EBCOSA was founded similarly to most churches during the apartheid era of South Africa<sup>11</sup>. Education, through the establishment of mission schools, was used as the tool with which to evangelise people. As Dean cautions (ibid) youth ministry developed as a product of this educational model. Research conducted on the EBCOSA (De Beer 1987 & Matham, 1997 & 2002), reveals that missionaries did not empower pastors and church members to continue this educational model of youth ministry. This research also reveals that perceptions of youth among missionaries also differed. Marlin Olsen, the church planter, viewed youth as a way to grow the church whereas the Genheimers, who were SIM (Serving in Mission) missionaries assisting the EBCOSA work, viewed youth as individuals needing the Gospel and able to effect change through service in the church (Matham, 2002: 136 -138). These different perceptions of youth are evident in the present leadership of this denomination.

In his book, 'Faithful change', James Fowler (1996) notes that as people change developmentally, their own experiences of the world around them and also their beliefs and values change. Fowler looks at how developmental theorists have come to the conclusion that a child's faith and God-images are incorporated with their parents' ways of being. For youth, God is emotionally associated with how they experienced relationships in early childhood.

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<sup>11</sup> This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

This then gives one some understanding as to how difficult it can be for youth to relate to God when important relationships are not in place. The EBCOSA is a small and close-knit congregation comprised of families that are biologically linked throughout South Africa. Reports of youth being discouraged because of a failure of leadership to “practise what they preach” have increased. Youth are not placed as priority in sermons, evangelism or discipleship. Youth are also not given consistent opportunities to exercise the gifts and talents they have within the church because they are said to be ‘the church of tomorrow’. Some youth have no consistent spiritual example to follow. Others are not sure what biblical truth really is as they do not see this in the lives of their parents and other adults in their lives. Youth leaders (who include pastors) are under pressure to be the main form of spiritual guidance but are constantly clashing with what parents are expecting from the youth. Youth in this denomination (14-17 years old specifically) are accused of not being committed to their relationship with Christ. A relationship that may have begun with a conscious decision to follow Christ but has not resulted in appropriate lifestyle changes thereafter. The challenge is who decides on or by what criteria these lifestyle changes are determined. All the above-mentioned ecclesial challenges have prompted a research study on what faith formation is and how it is reflected in the life of this age group. Faith development theory reflects on how people’s faith is formed and influenced at different life stages. This theory forms part of the broader discussion of faith formation (and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three). A close look at faith development theory relevant to this age group is also necessary in assisting the EBCOSA with its faith formation processes.

#### 1.4.2 Research question

In light of the above-mentioned empirical problem<sup>12</sup>, the following question will be investigated: What, if any, factors hinder and enhance the faith development of young people within the EBCOSA? Secondary questions would include: What is meant by faith formation as related to fourteen to seventeen year old youth? How may ecclesial, familial and societal relationships enhance or hinder this formation? Exploring this question will benefit the researcher, the EBCOSA, other denominations experiencing this problem, academia and also society at large.

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<sup>12</sup> According to Babbie & Mouton (2001:75), empirical questions address problems discovered in world one of Mouton’s three world’s framework. Data is then collected in World one, making it empirical problems.

## 1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework followed in this research study has been adapted from Richard Osmer. In his book, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (2008:4), Osmer acknowledges that this framework has been developed from practical theologians such as Don Browning (1991); Johannes Van der Ven (1999), Gerben Heitink (1999)<sup>13</sup> and other earlier scholars. According to Osmer (2008:3) ministerial experiences serve as teachable moments through which important skills and knowledge is gained. These experiences bring along ministerial challenges that are not restricted to one discipline's approach. The challenge to practical theologians is addressing these challenges and experiences through sound theological interpretation. Osmer proposes that four theological tasks be accomplished when discerning what the practical theological interpretation of an event or experience is. These tasks are the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task, the normative task and the pragmatic task (2008:5).<sup>14</sup>

The descriptive-empirical task is aimed at gathering information necessary for the success of the research study by asking the question "what is going on" within the context being researched. This information enables an understanding of the dynamics and patterns at work within a given context. It is gathered in an informal yet systematic manner and most often results in empirical research being conducted. Developing from the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975)<sup>15</sup>, this task calls for an awareness of the pre-understandings with which researchers begin interpreting the particular research areas they are involved in. This includes any biases the researcher may have prior to conducting the research. It is therefore important to note the hermeneutical circle at work in this framework (Osmer, 2008:22-23).

The interpretive task is aimed at explaining "why" certain patterns and dynamics have developed within the context. This is done through reflection on the cultural and congregational context by means of understanding the relevant theories at work within these

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<sup>13</sup> These earlier philosophers and theologians have reworked the older concept of a hermeneutical circle to describe the different tasks in a comprehensive process of interpretation (Osmer, 2005:304).

<sup>14</sup> Osmer's practical theological framework is used alongside the Three Worlds Framework aimed at knowledge production proposed by social scientist, Johann Mouton (2001:137-142). Mouton is the Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary studies (African Doctoral Academy) and his Three Worlds Framework is respected and used widely.

<sup>15</sup> In his book, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1975, Gadamer argues that all interpretation begins in an already interpreted world. He notes that this interpreted world includes the researchers traditions and preconceptions concerning the particular area of research.

contexts. Osmer (2008:12) considers a context as composed of the social and natural systems in which a situation unfolds. These systems are interconnected to varying systems at work within and also outside of the church (ibid: 17). A contextual analysis is an important component of this task because it looks at the various systems at work within any specific congregation. This then means that an interdisciplinary<sup>16</sup> discussion takes place during accomplishing this task. Theories from psychology and also sociology will also be consulted in this dissertation in an effort to understanding the faith development of youth holistically. Practical theological interpretation is deeply contextual and thinks in terms of interconnections, relationships and systems. It creates a bridge between the academy and the church and also between academic disciplines (2008:17).

The normative task is aimed at interpreting why the above mentioned patterns have been formed through establishing ethical norms and models of good practice appropriate for the challenges faced by congregations. In pursuit of what ought to be taking place in congregations, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) noted this stage as a fusion of horizons in which new insights are gained through dialogue between the interpreter (researchers) and interpreted (congregation) because both these contribute meaning. Osmer (2008:28) positions the four tasks he proposes within the three-fold office of Christ. Through His salvific work Christ became man's mediator. As a mediator Christ became a priest, a king and a prophet to mankind. Practical theological interpretation facilitates the congregation's participation in this three-fold office. This interpretation relies on a holistic use of Scripture that acknowledges the interrelatedness of the Old and New Testament. Through discussing the theological concepts (from South African and international scholars) relevant to faith formation studies, this task assists the congregation by stating what ought to be done concerning the challenges youth face. The theological concepts are found within an intra-disciplinary approach.<sup>17</sup> These concepts guide the researcher in proposing ethical principles, guidelines and rules by which to enhance the faith formation of congregations. Models of good practices are explored during this task because these offer leaders a general picture of the field in which they are acting and also ways they might shape this field toward desired goals in the next task (ibid: 8-10, 176). Osmer (ibid: 40-41) also notes the importance of congregational leaders being willing to

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<sup>16</sup> Johannes Van der Ven (1999:2) describes the shift from multi-disciplinary to intra-disciplinary and then to inter-disciplinary in his book, *Practical theology: an empirical approach*. This approach makes use of the tools and techniques from empirical sciences.

<sup>17</sup> By intra-disciplinary the researcher refers to disciplines within theology. This looks at past and present practices within the Christian tradition drawing Scripture and theological discussions. An important component here would be the descriptive stories from the congregation being researched.

engage the limitations of their attending to the particular life circumstances of the youth as a spiritual challenge during this stage of research. This is because youth are more likely to become active in the life of the congregation if it invests its youth ministry.

The pragmatic task is aimed at addressing how congregations can proceed after discussing and working through the first three tasks. After reflecting on what has emerged in the context, this task looks at strategies of action that are undertaken to shape events toward desired goals that the congregation may have. It takes leaders who think in terms of the entire congregational system and the church relationship to its context to realize this task (Osmer, 2008:10). Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) notes that new ways of thinking and acting in the world is necessary at this stage of the research process. The first task of practical theological interpretation (descriptive-empirical) is based on problems picked up during this last (pragmatic) task (Osmer, 2008:10).

These tasks are interactive and can be viewed as distinct but interrelated moments during the research process. For example, the empirical research findings are dependent on the interpretive framework of the researcher which initially influenced how this research was conducted. Likewise, these empirical problems could be brought to the fore during the pragmatic task or also issues raised in the normative task. What is also attractive about this framework is that there is no one starting point in the hermeneutical circle. Due to this interconnectedness, one may enter into this circle at any point (Osmer, 2005:304). A thicker descriptive of each of these tasks will be given in the relevant chapters of this dissertation. The pragmatic task brings several practical recommendations made throughout this dissertation together and is not necessarily addressing new recommendations in the final chapter.

The motivation behind using the four tasks of practical theological interpretation for this dissertation was influenced by the fact that pastors and congregational leaders are viewed interpretative guides to their faith communities and as such become an integral part of the research process (Osmer, 2008:24-25). Osmer (ibid: 26-28) views leadership as a communal effort in which all the voices within the community are considered as influential in addressing the challenges it faces. The empirical study included the voices of the youth, their

youth leaders and also the pastors as representatives (because only a sample was chosen) of the EBCOSA. This is based on a respect for the variety of ways ministry can be done. Ministry in its various forms is interconnected (ibid: 15). It is for this reason that this research study makes use of one faith community (EBCOSA) as a focused case in which empirical research is conducted as part of the descriptive-empirical task. This framework has served useful specifically in this context because not much academic research has been conducted within this faith community. The EBCOSA is governed on the basis of a hierarchical structure in which pastors are given the core positions of leadership. This framework is one which acknowledges the role of these leaders in influencing and also hindering change within the congregation. It also acknowledges the common structure of practical theological interpretation in both academy and ministry which is aimed at helping congregational leaders recognize this interconnectedness (ibid: 12).

An important contributing factor for using this framework is that it encourages that practical theologians (the researcher) make certain key decisions about methodology that are connected to pre-understandings that may exist (Osmer, 2005:306-308, Heitink, 1999:200). How the researcher understands the relationship between theory and praxis influences how empirical data is investigated, what is considered as norms and appropriate as models to guide present praxis. How Scripture, tradition, experience and reason are used as sources of justification within the research is also an important consideration for the validity of the dissertation. This framework lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach in which decisions about which other disciplines to engage with need to be made. In this dissertation these have been made as relevant and applicable to the discipline of youth ministry, which is understood as a branch of practical theology.

Finally, the theological rationale used in this dissertation has been broadly evangelical. Broadly in the sense that the context being investigated (the EBCOSA) adheres to a fundamentalist evangelical perspective but the intra-disciplinary perspectives drawn upon includes other evangelical perspectives that serve as helpful to the findings from the research conducted in this context. The researcher's use of the term evangelical is noted in the definitions discussed at the end of this chapter.

## 1.6 Purpose of the research study

The purpose of this research study is to explore the factors that hinder and enhance the faith formation of fourteen to seventeen year old youth. Consideration of whether faith formation is deemed important to these youth and their congregational leadership will also be made in efforts to partner with these youth concerning their faith development. Focus is placed on faith formation as relevant to this age group's faith formation process.

Research objectives serve as a map for the researcher and also the readers of a dissertation. These objectives correlate with the theoretical framework of this dissertation. The research objectives of this dissertation are to:

- Conduct a contextual analysis of the EBCOSA as the denomination being used as the focussed case for this research study (chapter two)
- Conduct an interdisciplinary theoretical study on faith formation (chapter three).
- Conduct an empirical study through the use of interviews and focus groups with the youth and its leadership (youth leaders and pastors or elders) within the EBCOSA. (Chapter four).
- Discuss the research findings discovered in this study (chapter four).
- Discuss ethical norms and models of good practice appropriate for the EBCOSA in relation to the research findings and its contribution towards a practical theology on youth faith formation from an evangelical South African perspective (chapter five).
- Identify strategies that will assist the EBCOSA in achieving its desired goals for its youth ministry. This objective reflects on the practical suggestions made during the empirical study and also practical strategies from earlier objectives (chapter six).

## 1.7 Research design and methodology

The theoretical framework used in this dissertation requires interaction with other disciplines. This research study develops through firstly exploring what theoretical research says concerning the context and also the discipline of faith formation and thereafter empirically investigating whether this theory is found relevant within a specific South African evangelical denomination. Theoretically, this dissertation reflects on, evaluates and compares what various researchers have written about faith formation. The disciplines of Psychology and Sociology have also been consulted. The empirical study explores whether faith

development (as an aspect of faith formation) is considered important to fourteen to seventeen year old youth and also what contributing and hindering factors are involved in the faith formation of this age group. This was done by using the EBCOSA as a focussed case<sup>18</sup> in which individual interviews and focus groups were conducted by the researcher.

### 1.7.1 Research design

A research design is a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends conducting the research because this is what directs the researcher into the research process (Mouton, 2001:55). The choice of research methods used depends on what the researcher is trying to find out (Silverman, 2001:25). To solely depend on purely quantitative methods could be naïve in a study that is also interested in the social and traditional construction of meaning which literature research seeks to correlate (Silverman, 2001:29). An attempt to quantify traditional life experiences of people can become dangerous because it can amount to a quick fix involving little or no contact with these people (Silverman, 2001:31). Without a theoretical rationale behind the tabulated categories, counting only gives a spurious validity to the research (Silverman, 2001:35-36). Bearing this in mind, this study uses a qualitative design by making use of an ethnographic approach. This is a qualitative approach in which the cultural and societal context of the specific case (EBCOSA) is taken seriously (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 642). Chapter two introduces this context but it is elaborated upon in chapter four to six later in the dissertation.

The EBCOSA has not conducted any research other than that of Matham (1997 & 2002) and De Beer (1987) referred to in chapter two of this dissertation. These have focussed on missions and more specifically, to discipleship as related to the foundation of the EBCOSA and its bible college. This research study is the first which concentrates on youth ministry in the EBCOSA. For this reason it is necessary that both theoretical and empirical methods be used to validate its secondary data (through use of relevant academic theories and previous case studies being conducted) and primary data (through the verbatim voices through interviews and focus group data from the unit of analysis) (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 72).

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<sup>18</sup> A case study is “the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant, looking intensely at an individual or small participant pool, drawing conclusions only about that participant or group and only in that specific context” (Smith, 2007:34). This study uses the EBCOSA as a case within this methodological paradigm but does not apply case study methodology in its entirety because interest in the youth and not specific young people was the focus.

### 1.7.2 Research methodology

Research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used (Mouton, 2001:56). This requires asking questions concerning how the goals stipulated in this dissertation will be achieved. Smith (2008:1) states that empirical research creates and validates theories about how people think and act, as researchers look for answers to practical questions.

An investigation of how fourteen to seventeen years old youth (as well as their direct leadership) understand and experience their faith was undertaken in this study. This was done by using the EBCOSA as an ethnographic case. Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within communities (Reeves, Kuper and Hodges, 2008: nl). The benefit of using this method lies in the researcher's ability to immerse herself in local congregations in which she could generate rich understanding of the social action present. This method also enabled a relationship with the participants (the EBCOSA) and academia in efforts to assist this faith community. Ethnographers commonly triangulate (that is, compare and contrast) interview and observation methods to enhance the quality of their work; this technique is important as what people say about their behaviour can contrast with their actual actions (ibid). As a qualitative ethnographic study, data was theoretically and socially constructed to validate the quality thereof. This specific case has included the use of individual interviews and focus groups conducted by the researcher (Louw, 1998:7). The researcher was a member of the denomination used as the case study. Continuing relationships with the youth and leadership afforded the researcher access to and the credibility to conduct research within this denomination.

### 1.7.3 Method of data analysis

Empirical data was analysed by reflecting on chapters two and three of this dissertation. The aim thereof was to reflect on how the context and theoretical study on faith formation had been evidenced in the interviews conducted. This was analysed by reflecting on how theory is strengthened by the empirical data in an attempt to answer the research question. Qualitative researchers make claims about their ability to reveal the local practices through which the end products are assembled (Silverman, 2001:12). Qualitatively, thematic analysis is the method of data analysis used in this study.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within data in an attempt to interpret various aspects of the research question (Braun & Clark, 2006:79 & Ezzy, 2002:88). This form of analysis has been considered one of the simplest forms of analysis that can be used by developing researchers. It is a method of analysis used for reporting the experiences, meanings and realities of participants and also for acknowledging the ways in which meaning is made within participants' social contexts (Braun & Clark, 2006:81). It is considered most valuable in contexts (like the EBCOSA) where new theories and interpretations are required (Ezzy, 2002:85). It is not restricted to one specific theoretical framework which makes it attractive in a theological study. Thematic analysis is flexible in that the researcher could either gain a rich description of the entire data set or give a more detailed account of one particular theme or group of themes (Silverman, 2006:83). Since the questions posed during the interviews were derived from the theory of chapters two and three, the latter approach has been adopted in this study and will be elaborated on in chapter four. This means that a theoretical thematic analysis has been used.

#### 1.7.4 Data collection process

The following qualitative research techniques were used to collect data in this empirical study:

*Observation:* According to Smith (2008:1) major factors for constructing a research project include determining a research question and providing a context for the study. This study used the context of the EBCOSA as the basis for research. Time was spent informally observing how church members, leaders, parents and youth relate to each other. The differences of the people in the different regions (e.g. Durban and JHB), were considered during this period to establish the integral characteristics of the total population. This observation period assisted the researcher in choosing the sample used during the interview process.

*Literary research* (literature study) was conducted prior to the empirical study in order to assist the researcher with formulating the questionnaires and also to gain a better understanding of both the context of the research problem (South Africa and EBCOSA) and

the theory about faith formation. Relevant academic journals, books, papers, theses, published literature reviews, key studies and reports were consulted.

*Reading of meeting and conference minutes:* A historical survey to develop a picture of the background of the situation (Smith, 2007:43) is beneficial to a research project in practical theology. The EBCOSA has thirty- three congregations operative nationally. These congregations have an average weekly attendance of 80 people. It is estimated that after sixty years in existence, approximately 2000 members and an uncertain number of adherents can be nationally accounted for. Minutes of the annual conference meetings were not easily accessible due to the denomination not having an archive and also changing secretaries. Despite concerted efforts made to recover these minutes, as stipulated by Smith (2007:34), none of these minutes were accessed. Two letters from pastors and a prominent leader in the denomination were retrieved and consulted in chapter two of this dissertation (see attached addendum C & D).

The *EBCOSA* was informed of my intention to use the church as a case study: This was done by writing a letter to the National Council and to each local congregation selected requesting permission to conduct the study (see attached addendum I). The intentions and reasons for this study were clearly stated. This process serves as a ‘traditional rite of passage’ within this denomination. A letter of approval was received from the National Council along with a list of churches, the active children and youth ministries and also the contact details of the pastors or elders (see attached addendum E and F). Both these letters were used during the ethical clearance process and the list aided the choosing of the final sample used. A third letter concerning the progress of this study was also sent to this council (see addendum J).

*Interviews Conducted:* Surveys, be it in the form of face-to-face interviews are conducted to answer certain questions or test certain hypotheses about a population in order to measure some characteristic(s) of the group of entities that are the object of the study (Hofstee, 2008:4). It is important that the opinions and thoughts of the EBCOSA congregants (youth and leadership) were heard as this study affects and depends on their co-operation not only for its success but for the aims stipulated in chapter one to be productive (this is discussed in chapter four). Structured interviews were the main form of data collected and was conducted personally by the researcher. A structured interview is an interview where a set of questions has been decided on before the interview and these were asked in the interview. The researcher ensured that all participants understood the questions posed whilst conducting

interviews since there should be no unclear messages to the respondent that may affect the coding process. This type of interview resembles a questionnaire (Addendum K and L) except that the researcher personally asks the questions (Rossouw, 2003:148). Research interviews were conducted to achieve aim one, two and three of this research study.

In order to ensure reliability of the data, all interviews were recorded (with the permission of the interviewee), transcribed and included in the final analysis of the study (Silverman, 2001:229-230). A tape-recorder<sup>19</sup> was used for all interviews and interviewees were informed about this. All interviews were conducted with an open mind-set, free of any prejudice against the interviewee as well as a warm and genuine attitude to enhance the interaction. Much effort was made to make the interviewee feel comfortable and safe. No person was coerced into an interview and the content of the interviews was held in the strictest confidence. All participants had access to a copy of the questionnaires. Thorough explanations of the questionnaires were given at the beginning of the interview to ensure that nobody felt threatened by or confused about any of the questions.

*Focus group conducted:* A focus group is aimed at collecting research data through various perceptions within a group of people. This data or subject content is specified by the researcher and interviewees are chosen on the basis of their contribution to the specific aims or outcomes projected by the researcher (Morgan 1998:29). The information received through discussion among the interviewees is known as primary data. According to Morgan (1998:9-13) focus groups comprise two functions: a way to listen and learn from people and also being a means of qualitative methodology. It is a way of listening and learning because it creates appropriate channels of communication between the researcher, the interviewees and the research team responsible for decoding the process. As an effective qualitative method in research, focus groups are used to learn more about the subject content and how this affects individuals. It helps the researcher understand what interviewees think about particular issues and it also creates an atmosphere in which people can better understand and interpret the issues mentioned. This helped to clarify how people viewed the particular issue addressed. Focus groups work best with a limited amount of people which helps to create a non-threatening atmosphere in which to share and when there is facilitator that is prepared and organised. This is not an opportunity for the facilitator to manipulate or convince others of

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<sup>19</sup> Two recorders were used at every interview and focus group to ensure that data was captured adequately.

their view but one in which the facilitator allows others to share and in turn learn from this experience (Morgan 1998:63).

Semi-structured focus groups were conducted with youth (14-17 years old) and church leaders in eight of the thirty-three of the South African congregations. One focus group per congregation (with the exception of one resulting in seven congregations) was conducted. It was important that the researcher capture the opinions and voices of the youth and the leadership involved with these youth. As noted later in this dissertation (chapter two), pastors in a family growth congregation are focused on building relationships with these families and addressing the challenges this context brings. These pastors in this denomination have the responsibility of preaching, counselling, visitation and other pastoral duties and generally do not have time to build relationships with the youth in their congregations. In some cases, because youth leaders are volunteers, they do not reach all the young people in their care. This causes friction and miscommunication in relationships between youth and their leadership. For this reason focus groups were used with the purpose of bringing these voices together to discuss factors related to the faith formation of these youth. The researcher initially began conducting structured focus groups using an information leaflet on the EBCOSA and pre-planned questions thereafter. This approach was projected because the focus groups were meant to be conducted with the pastor, youth leader and three young people (five per group) that were not individually interviewed. This did not work as planned because at most congregations the youth interviewed were also the youth included in the focus group resulting in questions being repetitive. Here the researcher conducted semi-structured focus groups using the key problematic topics arising from individual interviews as the focus of the group discussion. In this instance, the researcher served as a facilitator rather than the expert. The use of this method benefitted the research process because it gave the researcher an opportunity to interact with the people who were most affected by the problem. This created an opportunity for the leadership (youth leaders and pastors) and youth to hear the others' opinions and it also served as a means to bridging the communication or relational gaps between participants mentioned earlier. Each participant was introduced to the others before the group commenced.

Factual, opinion-related, open-ended and closed questions were used when conducting these interviews and focus groups. This is because some information is less theoretical and based on people's personal opinions, whilst others would call for factual answers. Part of the observation process involved the taking of field notes during and after

the interviews (and focus groups) recording the interviewer's (researcher) experience and that of each particular interviewee. These field notes reveal some of the challenges faced during this process. The excerpts below are taken from the researcher's field notes:

All my interviews & focus groups will be conducted over weekends (sat & sun). I would use two recording tools to ensure that I do not lose any data if any one tool breaks.

Congregation 2- was a challenge obtaining signatures of consent from the guardian of the youth being interviewed as this was a social worker. The fact that all forms and procedures had undergone ethical clearance was accepted favourably. Welcomed by pastor and youth leader and first interviewee at 7:45am. The youth leader was present all day ensuring that the process ran smoothly. One interview was even interrupted by a parent who had brought some coffee as a kind gesture. The recordings turned out much clearer and the new forms (interview schedule and focus group format) worked well. I must admit uncertainty on the relevance of how the focus group developed but was assured by the pastor and youth leader that the session was found really helpful.

Thus far interviews and focus groups were experienced as very draining. Precautions on caring for my throat would be needed. Transcriptions fees would need to be sourced as this was not taken into consideration earlier. This then brings a halt to the process.

Congregation 3 - there is no pastor at this church resulting in me interviewing the church elder. The elder could not participate in the focus group due to family obligations. The youth ministry was only revived two weeks ago meaning that there were only few youth resulting in the same youth being interviewed & participating in the focus group. Also one of the youth was not in the age specified and I was not notified of this prior to conducting the interview.

Generally it seems that most interviews with youth last 30 minutes at most.

Congregation 4- underestimated timeframe and also that I did not know how to get to the church. This resulted in me being an hour late but made up time since youth interviews are not longer than 30 minutes. This church has no youth ministry due to a church split not too long ago. There was no youth leader to interview & no other leader was arranged. We also had to include the youth who were interviewed in the focus group because the other youth to be used did not pitch. Focus group began with some silence but developed into a debate between youth and the pastor. This was due the challenges the church as a whole are experiencing.

The interviews and focus group were conducted on the same day for each congregation.

## 1.8 Ethical considerations

This dissertation used people (human beings) as a focus group by using a church denomination as its case study. Every effort was made to uphold the academic standards pertaining to the ethical codes with regards to how interviews and focus groups were conducted. One of the requirements of the University of Stellenbosch is that any research involving human beings obtain ethical clearance. According to the University's Framework policy for the assurance and promotion of ethically accountable research at the University of Stellenbosch (2009:1 & 5);

SU is also of the view that good science assumes ethical acceptability according to internationally acceptable norms and that the responsibility for this lies with every person conducting research under the auspices of SU... All non-health related research involving human subjects and conducted under the auspices of Stellenbosch University should comply with the regulations of the REC: Human Research (Non-Health). The researcher is ultimately responsible to apply for ethics approval for a given project and should make this decision after discussion with peers, the Head of Department, and the REC administration office, which will refer the matter to the chairperson of this committee for a decision, if necessary.

In South Africa, young people between the ages of fourteen to seventeen are considered minors. Research involving participants of this age is considered a risk and as such has to gain the approval of a statutory body, whom in this case is the Research Ethics Committee at the University. The application process was quite detailed and time consuming but the empirical research could not be conducted without this clearance. This process compelled the researcher to think about possible dangers to participants and also consider carefully what the empirical process would entail. In this instance permission also had to be obtained from the denomination being used as the focused case (letters attached as addendum F). The entire process from the time of applying to approval took five months (see attached certificate of approval as addendum G).

All the participants, as well as the parents or guardians and the relevant churches were informed about the interviews to be conducted. The University also maintains,

Where the object of investigation involves historical source materials, care should be taken to ensure that no feature of the source materials is altered, impaired or destroyed in any irresponsible manner. Where research is being done on the electronic transfer of data, care should be taken that the security and integrity of the data is not jeopardized...all sources of support should be acknowledged. Care should be taken to ensure that established scholarly and

scientific norms and practices are adhered to, for example professionalism, honesty, acknowledgement of sources and avoidance of plagiarism. Care should be taken to ensure that the research is carried out with the necessary respect for its possible environmental impact.

(University of Stellenbosch: Administrative Divisions website)

Historical sources (De Beer's thesis, Matham's thesis and dissertation, Winter school reports and EBCOSA Constitution) and all correspondence to and from the National Council of the EBCOSA are presented as they were received. Due care was exercised when using electronic data, such as accessing internet sources as well as when referring to other academic sources as to avoid plagiarism. This dissertation is aimed at helping the EBCOSA improve its congregational practises regarding youth ministry rather than jeopardise the denomination or the current relationships that exist. Consent forms were also given to the adult participants, parents and guardians to sign as to protect the youth. Youth were given accent forms to sign before conducting the interviews. These forms, as well as the risks involved in participating in this study were first explained to the participants. The opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point whilst completing this dissertation was also given and the procedures to follow in this instance was also explained. Samples of the forms and the questionnaires used in this study are attached in addendum I.

## 1.9 Theological nature of this research study

Practical theology is subdivided into various areas of specialisation based on the increasing empirical interests of the Church: interests that sought to direct themselves toward the efficiency of its work (Dietrich Rossler in Schweitzer & Van der Ven, 1999:29). Another reason for this subdivision was based on certain visible needs of the people of the church at the different periods in its existence (ibid: 30). These subdivisions resulted in various specialised discipline groups within the field (Church leadership, Community Development, Youth Work, etc.). Rossler adds that one's identity as a theologian, legitimacy for the choices of research made and reaching consensus regarding the things one does in the name of the church are all reasons which make practical theology distinctive. To act in the area of practical theology is to act in the name of the Church, not just to act on the basis of one's own personal, private authority (Rossler in Schweitzer & Van der Ven, 1999: 33). This statement is helpful when working in the area of youth ministry because youth ministry is part of the church and not an exclusive entity.

While the practice of youth ministry has been around for more than a century, it has not always been concerned with theological reflection. Thus, instead of seeing youth ministry as merely another department in the make-up of the local church, there is now a turning point that reflects an acknowledgement of the theological depth and possibilities of churches' ministries with youth. The practice of reflecting theologically on youth ministry is becoming both normative and necessary. Youth leaders are in need of theological depth in their practice, because lenses to help them understand that what they do is essentially about navigating the sacred connection between God and humans (Dean, 2011: 16). Youth ministry means responding to the flock God has given us in ways that are particular to them (ibid: 20-21). Youth ministry's great potential may lie in its ability to reimagine the church on behalf of the wider Christian community, a church in which God has called young people to play an irrepressible and irreplaceable part (ibid: 35). Research on how youth conceptualise and grow in their faith engages with the real issues these youth face in their journey with God. Youth ministry creates spaces in which God is discovered amidst the search for self.

The theological nature of this research study is grounded in an understanding of youth ministry as theologically based in the covenant of God's faithfulness toward these youth; in the youth growing in their faith through an ecclesial faith community; the family functioning as the main centre of religious teaching and the congregation as the sphere in which faith development is motivated and facilitated (Nel, 1998:13-25). Theologically sound youth ministry calls for a reconstruction of the past through addressing the present concerns of youth (Don Browning in Schweitzer & Van der Ven 1999:53).

#### 1.10 Delimitations of this research study

This research study is positioned within the discipline of Practical Theology. Research within this discipline is sensitive toward the context in which it is conducted (Osmer, 2008; Browning, 1991 & Van der Ven, 1999). The EBCOSA is a denomination that exists within South Africa. As such, it ministers to South African youth. References to the South African context are relevant to this study in order to understand the context in which this denomination exists and also the type of youth involved in its ministry. This is not a study on

the church as the body of Christ (or church history) in South Africa nor is it a study on youth development in South Africa.

Research within this discipline is both interdisciplinary and intra-disciplinary (Osmer, 2008; Browning, 1991 & Van der Ven, 1999). Chapters three and four of this dissertation focuses on the different (psychological, sociological and theological) perspectives of faith formation and these will be used to discuss how the researcher has developed a personal understanding of this concept as a theological process within youth ministry. This dissertation explores the faith formation of youth between the ages of fourteen and seventeen from a practical theological perspective. The researcher is positioned within this discipline and not as a sociologist or psychologist.

Through conceptualizing faith development, various modes<sup>20</sup> of faith formation have been discovered. These modes will be described but the meaning and value of each has not been explored in great detail. Finally, the research question posed in this dissertation aims to understand the factors that hinder and enhance the faith formation of youth. The factors discovered in this research study are mentioned and explained to some extent but each of these could be considered as individual research studies (as will also be indicated in chapter five) within practical theology.

### 1.11 Overview of chapters

The four tasks of practical theological interpretation; descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic are evidenced in this dissertation through interacting with each other at various points because each individual task is not restricted to one specific chapter. The interaction and mutual influence of all four tasks distinguish practical theology from other fields of study (Osmer, 2008:9-10). Acknowledging the common structure of practical theological interpretation in both the academy and ministry can help congregational leaders recognize the interconnectedness of ministry (ibid: 12). This process also enables constant reflection as the preceding tasks rely on the former and vice versa.

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<sup>20</sup> The researcher refers to modes as those things, activities or practices one participates in, in order to strengthen one's relationship with God and also the church. Research (Powell, Nel, Yust, Dean, Root, et al) has referred to these as church practices or activities. The term modes has been chosen because it relays more of a process at work rather than a non-intentional act.

The chapters as outlined in logical sequence for this dissertation are:

- Chapter One: Introduction and orientation to the research study

Chapter one introduces the topic, explaining why the researcher has chosen this topic as an area of research and also explaining the research problem. This chapter serves as the mind-map of this dissertation in that it introduces the reader to the scope of the study and also explains the methodology. The relevance of and background for why the faith formation (and development) of fourteen to seventeen year old youth is important to this research study is explained under the motivation for conducting this research study. The theoretical framework of the dissertation is explained. The use of a qualitative theoretical and empirical approach (through a case study) as the research design is validated. The Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa (EBCOSA) is the context out of which the research problem has developed. The value of this study to the field of practical theology is also elaborated on. Key terms as listed in the beginning of this dissertation are defined as relevant to this research study.

- Chapter Two: A contextual analysis of the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa (EBCOSA) – What’s going on?

The descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation is explored in this chapter. This task involves the process of gathering information that helps discern what is happening in a congregation. Although this often happens informally, the aim here is a more systematic and disciplined approach (Osmer, 2008:5-6). The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with insight into the denomination being used as the case for this dissertation in order to answer part of the descriptive question. Osmer’s framework usually places the cultural context through its various practices and rituals as well as the congregational context through its existing programmes within the interpretive task. This context is taken into consideration here because sketching an analysis of the EBCOSA<sup>21</sup> is deemed important at the beginning of the research study to ensure clear and systematic presentation of the material and logical exposition of the researcher’s argument. This chapter places emphasis on the socio-historical context within which the EBCOSA was established with the aim of understanding the identity and culture of this denomination. The EBCOSA is as an evangelical family-growth church within South Africa. The foundation and history of the EBCOSA as established by The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) is presented. The

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<sup>21</sup> The scarcity of academic literature on this denomination is another reason why the context is shifted to the descriptive-empirical task.

denominational structure, form of governance and theological framework of the EBCOSA is explained. The EBCOSA's understanding of faith development is explained within this theological framework. The history and present situation of youth ministry in EBCOSA is elaborated on.

- Chapter Three: Theoretical study on Faith Development – Why is this going on?

The interpretive task draws on relevant theories in an attempt to understand and explain why the congregation is experiencing the current challenges. Different theories that could shed light on the cultural and congregational context are considered here to better understand and explain why things are the way they are. (Osmer, 2008:6-7). This chapter discusses the interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives on faith formation through the disciplines of psychology and sociology. The conceptualisation of faith formation and the processes and theories involved therein is discussed. Faith development theory is one of these theories and has been chosen as the focus of the empirical study in order to understand the specific age better. Possible relational and contextual factors hindering and enhancing faith formation are discussed. The process involved in choosing these theories and concepts are discussed. How these theories and processes contribute to the faith formation of fourteen to seventeen year old youth is elaborated on. Definitions and processes relevant to the EBCOSA context are highlighted. The chapter concludes with how spiritual growth as an important part of faith formation has been conceptualised by the researcher as application to ministry with fourteen to seventeen years old youth ministry and also within an evangelical context.

- Chapter Four: Empirical study conducted within the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa – What is going on and why this is going on?

This chapter continues from chapter two in answering the descriptive-empirical question through reflection on the empirical study conducted within the EBCOSA. The research process (methodology) followed during the analysis of the research findings is explained here. This chapter explains how the research sample was chosen, how data was collected and also why these tools were chosen. The data analysis plan is also explained and it reports on the research findings from the perspectives of the youth and their leadership being investigated. This chapter is concluded by a summary of the main results (positive and negative) of this study being given.

- Chapter Five: Towards a practical theology of youth ministry from an evangelical South African perspective – What ought to be going on?

The normative task makes use of theological concepts to interpret what ought to be going on within the congregation. Ethical principles, guidelines and rules that are relevant to the context are used to guide later strategies of action. This could also involve past and present practices within EBCOSA in an effort to seek guidance on normative patterns of behaviour. The researcher has approached the chapter by first exploring models of good practice through the lens of intra-disciplinary reflections on faith formation in youth ministry and thereafter connecting these models to the theological concepts from which they stem within a South African context (Osmer, 2008:8-10). The normative question; what ought to be going on is explored from the voices of the youth and their immediate leadership during the empirical study as well as a brief comparative study within the field of practical theology. Research findings through a discussion and explanation of the main trends, patterns, similarities and differences that have emerged from this study in comparison with three others are discussed. How the findings of this study contribute toward a practical theology of youth ministry from an evangelical South African perspective is discussed.

- Chapter Six: Practical Implications of this research study – How might we respond?

This chapter explores the pragmatic task of practical theological interpretation. The research findings (practical suggestions made) from the empirical and theoretical study are elaborated on in an effort to strategize how the EBCOSA may actively respond to the challenges and opportunities faced within its youth ministry. New ways of thinking and acting as a denomination positioned within a South African context are proposed (Osmer, 2008:23). The implications of this study for policy and practice of youth ministry within the EBCOSA are noted. The EBCOSA is used as a possible model for other evangelical denominations.

- Chapter Seven: Conclusion to the research study

This chapter is a summary of the main argument of this dissertation through reflecting on the research problem, question and response found. The researcher makes certain recommendations based on the research found to the EBCOSA, youth ministers in South Africa and highlights aspects of this study that need further research. The limitations of this

study are discussed. It concludes with a description of how the findings of this study will be disseminated.

#### 1.12 Terms relevant to this study

The terms defined below are those used most often in this dissertation as relevant to this research study. Each of these convey varying meanings dependant on the purposes and contexts in which they are used. The following definitions reflect the way in which the researcher understands these concepts within the context of practical theology and more specifically youth ministry:

*Youth* –According to the National Youth Act of 1996, youth in South Africa are defined as persons in the age group 14 to 35 years with early youth being 14–24 years old and later youth or early adulthood being 25–34 years old. Attaching an age to the definition of youth is contentious among researchers focussed on youth. This dissertation uses this term as any young person (aged fourteen to seventeen years old) experiencing the onset of puberty and developing a fully individuated adulthood. This young person is experiencing a time characterized by identity, moral and faith formation. This involves discovering social roles within their families, peer groups, faith communities, cultures and societies (Dean, et al, 2001:22 & Nel, 1998: 34-35). The terms youth and young person are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

*Youth ministry* - There are various types of youth ministry depending on the contextual focus thereof (e.g. Program orientated youth ministry or Christ-orientated youth ministry, etc). This dissertation reflects on youth ministry practices (which includes programs and activities within congregational contexts as well as biblical teaching and discipleship) and also how young people are spiritually formed through these practices (Christian education, etc.) and also the various relationships they are part of (family, peers, etc.). Youth ministry is understood as the holistic (physical, spiritual, intellectual and sexual) ways in which young people are ministered to and alongside. This then means youth have the responsibility of getting personally involved in their faith formation process.

*Church* - a local assembly of those who profess faith in and allegiance to Christ. These people agree in doctrine, policy and practice (Acts 2:46, Ephesians 4:1-6) and are organized with church officers (e.g. Pastors). This dissertation makes use of this term as referring to a local congregation and not the broader ecclesial body. Where this is done (chapter two and six), it is stated as different. This term is used interchangeably with the term faith community in this dissertation.

*Denomination* - refers to the traditional theological, ritual and symbolic culture and worldview of a congregation. This includes the congregation's history, structures and polity. This dissertation refers to the term as all the congregations within the EBCOSA as a whole entity. It does not refer to the ecumenical ecclesial body as a whole.

*Church practices* – refers to the values, norms and ways we are church. Denominations function in different ways to promote order within the local assemblies. Church practices here would refer to the activities (including modes) and patterns that are put in place (naturally and systematically) in order for the church to function efficiently.

*Faith development* – Faith is relational and as such involves interactive and accountable relationships. These relationships are connected to important processes and theories. Its connection to faith formation lies in these processes with faith development only being one part thereof. Faith development theories are informed by specific perspectives reflecting on human behaviour. Faith development of the Christian through its various modes relies on the relationships built within the faith community with its central aim being spiritual growth, not religious adherence.

*Faith formation* – The overarching understanding of faith formation used in this dissertation describes faith formation as the ecclesial process towards spiritual growth. This process includes developmental theories and Christian practices used by the faith community in order to promote a Christ-like lifestyle in the lives of its youth. Discipleship forms part of this process.

*Spiritual growth* – referred to synonymously with spiritual maturity. Spiritual growth is evidenced in a life of gratitude, peace and transformation until Christian practices became a daily reality in one's life. It is a mind-set and lifestyle shift towards what Christ considers priority in one's life.

*Evangelical* –An evangelical is one who knows and has personally placed their faith in Jesus Christ. This person believes in and proclaims the salvific work of Christ, the inerrant and inspired Word of God and a Triune God. Evangelicals believe in sovereign, transcendent, personal and infinite God who is holy, loving, and compassionate and identifies with the sufferings of His people. The Word of God is accepted as authoritative guide for both faith and practice. They rely on the illumination of the Holy Spirit because they recognise the total depravity of humanity through original sin. Salvation is through grace and faith alone and not by works. Spiritually growth takes places through the processes of justification and sanctification. Evangelicals get involved in outreach and service as evidence of this spiritual growth. They look forward to an imminent, personal return of Jesus Christ. Justification and sanctification are crucial to understanding faith formation within this evangelical perspective.

### 1.13 Conclusion

This chapter has served as the mind-map of this dissertation by introducing the research theme of this research study and contextualising it within the South African state of youth development. The EBCOSA has been positioned as a denomination within this South African context. This chapter has discussed the personal and academic motivations for conducting this research study. It has described the research problem of this dissertation and stated the research question intended to be answered in this research study. The theoretical framework of practical theological interpretation has been adopted from scholars like Johannes Van der Ven, Don Browning, Gerben Heitink and eventually the four tasks proposed by Richard Osmer. These tasks have guided the researcher in stipulating the purpose of the research study under five core objectives. The EBCOSA has been chosen as a specific case as the main unit of analysis upon which this study is based because of its qualitative research design. Interviews and focus groups within this unit of analysis are proposed as the methodology used within this design. The theological nature of this research study and also the delimitations of this research study have been discussed. The chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters of the dissertation and key terms relevant to this study.

Chapter two is a contextual analysis of the EBCOSA asking the question; what is going on. The descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation is explored in this chapter. This chapter focuses on the South African context in which colonization, the apartheid and post-apartheid periods impacted how the church was formed. It is also the historical context from which present youth development discourses are taking place. This is the context into which the EBCOSA was founded. This denomination's structure, governance and theological framework are discussed with the intention of understanding how its youth ministry has developed over time and through different contexts into its present state.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVANGELICAL BIBLE CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (EBCOSA)

#### 2.1 Introduction

The descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation is explored in this chapter. This task involves the process of systematically gathering information that helps discern what is happening in a congregation (and in this instance a denomination) (Osmer, 2008:5-6). This task embodies a spirituality of presence in which the researcher aims at being attentive to what is going on in the lives of individuals (youth), their families and also the faith community (ibid: 34). This has also occurred through the observations made prior to conducting this study. In this way information is not gathered haphazardly during crisis situations.

Chapter one described the overarching purpose of this research study as an effort to explore what factors hinder and enhance the faith formation of fourteen to seventeen year old youth. The first research objective of finding out what is going on within the EBCOSA is addressed in this chapter by describing the focus denomination within its historical-social context with the aim of understanding the identity and culture of this denomination. Chapter one positioned this research study within the discipline of Practical Theology noting this discipline's sensitivity toward the context in which research is conducted (Osmer, 2008; Browning, 1991 & Van der Ven, 1999). Osmer's framework usually places the cultural context through its various practices and rituals as well as the congregational context through its existing programs within the interpretive task. He (Osmer, 2008:12) considers a context as composed of the social and natural systems in which a situation unfolds. These systems are interconnected to varying systems at work within and also outside of the church (ibid: 17). The context in which a congregation ministers in influences its local practices, values and habits as a faith community. A contextual analysis looks at the various systems at work within any specific congregation. In turn analyzing local congregations, helps scrutinize the corporate personality of these congregations and also reflects on the congregational culture active amidst its societal context (Hendriks, 2004: 106). This dissertation began with a brief sketch of youth development and ministry in South Africa because this is the context in which this denomination ministers. The EBCOSA is an evangelical denomination foundation by

TEAM and finds its historical roots embedded in this South African context. Sketching an analysis of the EBCOSA is deemed important at the beginning of the research study to ensure clear and systematic presentation of the material and logical exposition of the researcher's argument.<sup>22</sup> This chapter takes a closer look at these historical roots, EBCOSA's denominational structure, its theological framework with reference to faith formation and the history of its youth ministry. It is for these reasons that the researcher has repositioned the cultural context from the interpretive task of Osmer's model to the descriptive task.

The research question posed in this dissertation is: What, if any, factors hinder and enhance the faith development of young people within the EBCOSA? Osmer (2008) describes presence as taking the context that shapes these young lives and the lives of the communities in which they are rooted seriously. A contextual analysis of the EBCOSA describes how this denomination was founded by an American mission organization (TEAM), within the historical context of South Africa. This means that this denomination was directly influenced by the changing sociopolitical circumstances of the country because their sociopolitical implications of the prevailing sociopolitical order determined when, where and how Christianity emerged (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994). Missionary endeavors and ecclesial developments during three specific periods of South African history; colonization, the apartheid and post-apartheid eras are taken into consideration. This dissertation positions the EBCOSA as an evangelical church within the rich history of the South African church. The history of the EBCOSA as founded by an American mission organization is reflected on.

## 2.2 The foundation and history of the EBCOSA in South Africa

One of the delimitations sited thus far has been that this is not a study on church history or youth development in South Africa. Reference to South African church history is however briefly made as important to understanding the context into which the EBCOSA was founded. Reference to the social challenges youth in this country are facing is also relevant to understanding the type of young person present in EBCOSA's local ministries to youth. These references are limited to understanding TEAM ministry in South Africa as a mission

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<sup>22</sup> The researcher wrestled with the words 'study' and 'analysis' when deciding on the title of this chapter. A congregational study would carefully reflect on the life of a (one) congregation at the expense of certain exterior aspects affecting that congregation (e.g. South African apartheid history). A contextual analysis incorporates the congregational study by examining and interpreting all the influential (interior and exterior) aspects of a denomination and not merely one congregation. A contextual analysis discovers the identity of the denomination at micro and meso levels.

organisation which was headed up by white American males to the coloured people in South Africa (Matham, 2002). Understanding this history and its impact on the EBCOSA as a South African denomination is important to understanding the present state of youth ministry in this denomination.

### 2.2.1 Brief history of the South African church

South Africa has been described as one of the most intensively occupied mission fields by the early twentieth century. As the country's infrastructure and economy developed, doors for sharing the gospel increased. This influx of Christians from all around the world led to the rise of various Christian institutions and movements at the forefront of justice and reconciliation (Suthner 2009: xi). Moravian missionaries were active in Genadendal as early as 1737 amongst the Khoi and San people. It is reported that Johannes van der Kemp was already involved in missionary outreach to the indigenous and slaves since 1799 (Suthner, 2009: xv) through the London Mission Society amongst the Xhosa people. 1795 to 1883, Robert Moffat was a missionary to the Tswana people in South Africa (Synan in<sup>23</sup> Horton & Horton, 2006: 569). Outreach amongst the Xhosa people led to the establishment of the South African Missionary Society in 1799 focused on evangelizing slaves. In 1804 the South African church and state were declared separate (Smit, 2003). In 1806 laws excluding black people from land ownership through high taxes were put in place (Smit, 2003). The Anglo-Boer wars (1899-1902) also led to discriminatory laws requiring black people to carry passes and their social practices and jobs were also restricted. The colony also instilled the practice of separate churches for black and white members.

Nineteenth century South Africa was characterized by three holistic expressions of Christianity namely; Afrikaner Christianity (under the Dutch Reformed Church), Missionary Christianity (to the Xhosa community) and Christianity focused on the social gospel (Shaw in Horton & Horton, 2006: 521- 522). The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (church) was the first established church in South Africa in 1652. The Methodist Church was the second church established by the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1815. Afrikaner Christianity was enforced after the Afrikaners won the war at the Blood River over the Zulu's in 1833. This led the Afrikaners to believe that they were God's elect to rule and over the Zulu's who were not (ibid: 521). In 1806 British power assumed control up till 1910. This allowed many white, English-speaking Christians access into the country to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with

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<sup>23</sup> Horton, D & Horton, R edit a commentary titled: The Portable Seminary in which several evangelical scholars have contributed.

the locals. The National Party established under this British rule abolished slavery in 1836 resulting in Afrikaner relocation from British controlled areas. This initiated the apartheid<sup>24</sup> regime in which this Afrikaner Christianity opposed all non-white people groups through using political mediums. This led to the establishment of the third denomination being the Baptists in 1820. The fourth was the Presbyterians in 1824 with the Anglicans establishing their church in 1829. David Livingstone was a missionary passionate about ending the slave trade in Africa during 1813 and 1873 (ibid: 569). The first slaves were only converted in 1838. Missionary outreach to the Xhosa people led to the first black Christian leaders in the country. These leaders held to an evangelical theology in which inward piety was prioritized. Dutch reformed theologian and minister, Andrew Murray was integral in establishing the South African General Mission (now African Evangelical Fellowship) which served as a catalyst for this inter-racial outreach during that time. Missionaries to South Africa brought their own attitudes concerning church, state, power, race and ministerial leadership with them adding to the existing segregation of race groups in the country during the colonial and apartheid eras. Another group of missionaries (James Rose Innes, John Merriman and JW Sauer); called Cape liberals classified themselves as friends of the natives. This group advocated for the incorporation of blacks and coloured people into the political life of the colony which was an opposition to Afrikaner ruled republics (De Gruchy, 2009: 32-33). This opened the Cape to the work of the Moravians who had done extensive mission work among the coloured people specifically<sup>25</sup> (ibid: 58).

By the late nineteenth century Christianity had grown across all racial groups in South Africa. The Lutheran church was later (1950's) established through German, Norwegian and Swedish relationships with South Africa. The Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches also developed in the late nineteenth century (Smit, 2003). John Drake is known as the missionary who founded Pentecostalism in South Africa (Apostolic Faith Mission Church and Zionist Christian Church) in 1908. By 1990 the ZCC was known as the biggest Christian voice in South Africa (Synan in Horton & Horton, 2006: 535). According to Mark Shaw (in Horton & Horton, 2006: 522), the third expression of Christianity in South Africa was one which prioritized the social gospel. This was headed up the Anglicans who opposed Afrikaner

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<sup>24</sup> Apartheid is the catch word for the multitude of racially based control measures implemented and regularly amended by the NP government to resolve the contradictions inherent in South Africa's modernisation process (Terreblanche, 2002: 314).

<sup>25</sup> This included the establishment of the Coloured Political Association at the Moravian mission at Mamre in 1900 (De Gruchy, 2009:58).

and English nationalism through promoting economic and political justice in the country. South Africa became the most Christianized country in Africa because of this (ibid: 523).

The Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) was formed in 1936 which marked the end the missionary age. Confessional theological differences imported from Europe (Protestant, Catholic, Pentecostal & Independent Christianity) created a mosaic form of christianities and theologies rather than a set of uniform ideas and values or a monolythical institution called the church in South Africa (De Gruchy, 2009: xvii). The political system of the apartheid era existed since 1948 till 1994 even though racial tensions in the country were already present during colonization. Evangelization without building on and transforming the traditional cultural values and social structures of a community was doomed to failure (De Gruchy, 2009:169). British reign in South Africa also came with religious reinforcement. The Englishmen believed that they were divinely chosen by God and that they would promote a Christian society in which English was propagated as one of the high morals of the country (Terreblanche, 2002:301). This was no different during the apartheid era when the Christian National Party also held to an ideology in which racial separation in terms of calling and mission of Afrikaners was justified (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994: 246). During the apartheid years, the separate worlds in which South Africans lived were mirrored in separate churches, convictions, spiritualities and practices (Smit, 2009: 397; De Gruchy, 2009”114). An apartheid theology validating scriptural texts as evidence for apartheid intensified this divide. It was at the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960<sup>26</sup> that the unity of the Church and denial of biblical support for apartheid was denounced publicly (Smit, 2003). Stamoolis (in Horton & Horton, 2006: 573) says that the translation of the Bible into various indigenous languages was seen as one of the reasons for a segregated South African church yet also one of the reasons transformation was possible in this country. It was only once this denunciation took place publicly that the church could become more instrumental in the social transformation from the apartheid struggle (Smit, 2003). The EBCOSA cannot be separated from the historical and social processes that took place because it is part of South African society. Many political leaders fighting against apartheid were church leaders but it has not been ascertained whether any of the EBCOSA was active participants thereof.

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<sup>26</sup> At the annual conference of the African National Congress (ANC) held in Durban on 16 December 1959, the President General of the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli, announced that 1960 was going to be the "Year of the Pass." The Sharpeville massacre occurred on 21 March 1960, at the police station in the South African township of Sharpeville in Gauteng. After a day of demonstrations, a crowd of about 5,000 to 7,000 black protesters went to the police station. The South African police opened fire on the crowd, killing 69 people. ([www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za))

The year 1994 marks the political shift of the South African government, calling an end to apartheid. A government governed by democracy came with this political shift resulting in the freedom of religion in South Africa being initiated. The new Constitution of February 1997 has a Bill of rights affirming freedom of religion, belief and opinion, freedom of expression and assembly (Smit, 2009). This democratic constitution promotes a multi-religious tolerance and respect. Today, South Africans regularly attend church services and worship in multi-racial congregations (Smit, 2009: 400). The involvement of church leaders in the apartheid struggle resulted in a renewed interest in and attendance to faith communities. According to Statistics South Africa (2004:24), religious comparisons after Census 2001<sup>27</sup> revealed that in 1996, approximately 30, 0 million people were classified as belonging to a Christian religious group of one kind or another, compared to 35, 8 million in 2001. The final religious statistics revealed that 79, 8% of the South African population reported being Christian (ibid: 27-28). In both censuses, approximately one-third of the population indicated that they belonged to mainline<sup>28</sup> Christian churches. These churches include reformed churches, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and the United Congregational Church of South Africa. The EBCOSA is not listed as a mainline church. Census 2001 revealed that the three top denominations coloured people attended were: Apostolic churches, other Christian churches and Pentecostal or Charismatic churches. This is of specific reference to this dissertation because the EBCOSA is a predominantly coloured denomination (Matham, 2002). The high percentage of Christians in South Africa has been accredited to Africans taking ownership of the Christian faith. Christianity would have found no large-scale place or power in South Africa if it had not become an African religion (Chidester et al, 1997: 3). Gradually, more African preachers, teachers, and lay workers took on leadership roles within the church as opposed to previous organizational hierarchies of foreign missionaries.

### 2.2.2 Foundation of the EBCOSA as part of the South African church

Reflection on the role Christianity has played in the social formation of South Africa has been deemed necessary to understand the social context out of which the EBCOSA was

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<sup>27</sup> This was the last time the South African census included religion in its questionnaire. The question of religion was low on the list of priorities in Census 2011. It did not make it to the final list of data items (FAQ document of Census 2011 News, [statssa.gov.za](http://statssa.gov.za))

<sup>28</sup> Mainline churches are those denominations that have played leadership roles in many aspects of South African church history. These churches are the most visible in local communities as they have established buildings and good signage. They are also listed in most telephonic directories making them most accessible. They share a common approach to social issues that often leads to collaboration in organizations such as the [World Council of Churches](#). These churches are also members of the South African Council of Churches which was formed in 1969 (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:258).

founded. Reference to the periods of colonization, apartheid and post-apartheid South African history were made to enable the reader a brief understanding of the context into which this denomination was birthed. The formative role Christianity has played in shaping the social history of South Africa is important to understanding the social circumstances in which TEAM founded the EBCOSA (Suthner, 2009: xi). Attention is now shifted to the foundation and history of the EBCOSA in South Africa.

The masters and doctoral thesis' of Dr. Wilfred Matham (1997 & 2002) and Rev. Joe De Beer (1989), two respected senior pastors in the EBCOSA and also two of the first believers from TEAM's mission work are the two available academic sources on the EBCOSA. These are used extensively in this chapter. In 1989, Rev. De Beer published his Master's thesis entitled; *Missions Emphasis in the Evangelical Bible College of South Africa* focussing on a stronger emphasis on missions in the curriculum of the college (ibid: 5). In 1997 Dr. Matham published his Master's thesis which was later (2002) continued for his doctoral studies entitled; *The Evangelical Alliance Mission: An evaluative study of its discipling ministry among the coloured people of Swaziland and South Africa*. This dissertation served as an evaluative study of TEAM's discipling ministry among the coloured people of Swaziland and South Africa. Both scholars extensively discuss the history of the EBCOSA in these works. Written reports from a recent (2013) pastoral winter school (in Cape Town) reflecting on the history of the denomination, are also consulted.

The EBCOSA was founded by TEAM in 1952 (De Beer, 1987: 11). This was the time Hendrik Verwoerd served as prime minister of South Africa. Verwoerd replaced the policy of apartheid with a non-racist policy of separate development. This would ideally mean that all nine African ethnic groups would share in national sovereignty and political freedom. This was not practically implemented (Terreblanche, 2002:300). TEAM is an interdenominational mission agency with strong emphasis on evangelism through church planting (Matham, 1997:3 & 2002: 3). It was founded in 1890 by Fredrik Franson and was then called The Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America. The name changed to TEAM on 12 May 1949 (Matham, 1997:2). TEAM missionaries to South Africa were mainly white males such Marlin Olson, Raymond Saxe, William Dawson and others. This positively suited the social context of the country at the time. By the 1950's almost 100 apartheid laws were adopted controlling the lives of black people (Smit, 2003). The inception of the apartheid government in South Africa created much confusion as to the form and role of Christianity in this country. While the ANC (African National Congress) called for Christian justice, the National Party

appealed for Christian mercy that would forgive its implication in the brutal history of the apartheid (Chidester et al, 1997: 1). In 1950, the Population Registration Act; in which people were defined according to the colour of their skin was passed (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:245). This was also the same year the Group Areas Act ; in which race groups were separated according to the geographical areas they were restricted to, was passed (ibid:252). This was connected to the laws requiring black people to carry passes made during the colonial period. 1956 was also the year that the political rights of coloured people were evoked under a Christian Nationalist Party (Terreblanche, 2002: 306).

Education was fundamental to missionary policy (De Gruchy, 2009:68). Education, was enforced by foreign missionaries through establishing mission schools the tool by which to evangelize people. Churches and mission organizations maintained its Christian values in South African society through maintaining its control over mission schools until the 1950's. This created the perception that Christianity and education were integrally related (ibid). The Bantu Education Act was passed in 1953 which led to the take -over of mission schools by government (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994: 266). Education was perceived as essential for the future well-being of the country but discrimination between race groups was extended to this aspect of society as well. Coloured and black people were given a basic education (industrial skills) and whites were equipped for higher education (De Gruchy, 2009: 69). Chapter one indicated that this denomination was founded similarly to most churches during the apartheid era of South Africa. The EBCOSA was founded through the establishment of a mission school at Florence in Swaziland in 1921. Education was used as a tool to share the gospel with children. It was at this mission school that teachers like William Dawson taught that a relationship with God was to be prioritized. Dawson was passionate about equipping children and youth with educational skills and also their commitment to Christ (Matham, 1997:34 & 2002: 122). The first two coloured teachers at Florence were John Mackay (who served as principal) and Ian Swales (Matham, 1997: 35). Youth ministry later developed as a product of this educational model.

Religion was part of the fabric of daily life for black South Africans prior to missionaries' arrival in South Africa. TEAM missionaries planted the church for specific race groups and even extended this format to how they trained church leaders. The initial focus of TEAM was to evangelize the black<sup>29</sup> people of Natal and Swaziland (Mortenson, 1994:627)

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<sup>29</sup> In South Africa the term black was understood as belonging to a "black" ethnicity, typically having a degree of Sub-Saharan African ancestry, or who are perceived to be dark-skinned relative to other "racial groups".

and later shift focus to the coloured people in the Transvaal. Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994: xv) say that black people resisted Christianity by adopting religious practices that opposed colonial Christianity<sup>30</sup>. It turned out that the first converts (EBCOSA) were coloured people with this still being the dominant racial group comprising this denomination today. Marlin Olsen, one of the first church planters (missionaries) and Sjef Widdershoven led the coloured work in Natal whilst Hilton Vandayar, a local pastor planted the coloured church in Cape Town (Matham, 2002). The EBCOSA was divided into black and coloured racial groups due to the political state of the country at the time and also because of doctrinal differences. Congregations were segregated by being named numerically, namely: Church 1 (The Black church), Church 2 (the Indian church) and Church 3 (the coloured church), (Matham, 1997:1 & 2002:2). The black church was later named the Bantu Evangelical Church and the coloured was named the Evangelical Bible Church. The name, Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa is a twenty-first century development. It used to be referred to as the Evangelical Bible Church (EBC). The new name incorporates the two congregations in Zimbabwe as well as the two congregations in Swaziland as part of the southern part of Africa. It was also instituted due to the discovery of a different denomination with the same name in Namibia. The division of the EBCOSA work along racial lines has hindered the denomination's testimony in a multiracial country (Matham, 2002: 134). After various efforts at uniting into one multi-racial denomination, the black church (church 1) and colored church (church 3) agreed to reconciliation talks resulting in them being merged into one denomination.

Dr. Shayi (senior pastor of the black church) is also the principal of the International College for Bible and Mission (ICBM), where many of the EBCOSA's leadership have enrolled for further theological training. In 1941 Union Bible Institute (UBI) was founded to train black church leaders. In 1950 the Evangelical Bible Institute (EBI) was founded to train blacks in Gauteng while Johannesburg Bible Institute (JBI) was founded to train coloured people. Later (1957) Durban Bible College was founded in Natal to train Indian leaders. The Indian church (church 2) has not united but a partnership between the Evangelical Bible College (EBCOSA's training institution) and Durban Bible College (Indian church's training institution) has remained constant. The Evangelical Bible College (EBC) was founded in Cape Town in 1978 for mixed race leadership training. These theological institutions were all later opened up to mixed race groups and also students from other (non-EBCOSA) denominational backgrounds.

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<sup>30</sup> The Khoisan was the first people encountered by Europeans who assumed that these natives lacked a religious life because it did not look like the faith they were used to (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994: xix).

It was mentioned that the 1990's marked a new political and religious era for South Africa (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994: 250). TEAM mission have realized how the apartheid era impacted the way they approached ministry in South Africa. Racial power imbalances between missionaries and the local leaders were evidenced by the fact that not much work was done after missionaries left. It accommodated the existing political and social structures and prejudices in the country (Matham, 1997:11- 14). Local leadership was not trained to continue the ministry in a dynamic South African context but to adhere to doctrinal teachings specific to the mission organization. Pastors and converts did ministry according to what they were taught and also based on regulations stipulated through funding agreements. Matham (1997:11 & 2002: 198) reveals that TEAM's approach to ministry in the EBCOSA was not based on the biblical notion of discipleship according to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. It consequently failed to reconcile the vertical (practical service and skills development of its members) and horizontal (relationship with Christ) dimensions of the Gospel, resulting in a dualism between spiritual and physical concerns. The leadership of this denomination was trained to serve its own (lower class coloured people) resulting in no focus on global missions.

TEAM have written a confession and repentance of conformity to the apartheid philosophy in South Africa to the EBCOSA on 24 May 1993 (see addendum B) apologizing for using the apartheid regime of this country to validate its missionaries' actions and decision making concerning this ministry. In this statement TEAM acknowledge segregating congregations along racial lines as unbiblical and encourage the establishment of multi-racial congregations. They also call on all the congregations' (church 1-3) to get involved in joint planning for the ministry. This confession asks the church in Southern Africa for forgiveness for its role in enhancing apartheid regimes.

### 2.3 EBCOSA's structure, governance and theological framework

Studying the character and culture as well as what is happening in a congregation is important to understand how liturgy, polity and membership of that congregation have shaped its faith traditions (Hendrics, 2004: 37 & Osmer, 2008: x). The descriptive- empirical task of practical theology asks "What is going on?" in a particular context in an attempt to gather information that helps discern patterns and dynamics within the specific context (Osmer,

2008:4). Resources used to analyze a congregation's context are not the same as another since different denominations respond to change differently. In some instances, the success of a denomination could be how it survives to remain the institution it sets out to be (Ammerman, 1997:4-5). The present research study is compared to three similar studies of youth faith formation from three different geographical contexts. This practice serves as another way of understanding what is going on within the EBCOSA but also serves as exploring three possible models of best practice in guiding the EBCOSA.

What will transpire from this point is a description of the character and culture of the EBCOSA in an effort to discern patterns and dynamics in this denomination's history that has affected its youth ministry. This will be done by unfolding the EBCOSA's denominational structures; its governance and its theological framework by examining its congregational life (resources, structures of authority, culture) and also its theological language (ibid).

The vision of the EBCOSA is: to obediently, faithfully, sacrificially and loyally participate in God's mission by making Him known to all nations and peoples of the world by proclamation of Jesus Christ as only Savior and Lord, and through biblically legitimate ways, so that they would be delivered from Satan's kingdom of sin and evil, and transferred to the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ (Revised Constitution, 2008:5).

According to its constitution, the mission of the EBCOSA is to (ibid):

- To proclaim the self-revelation of God in the Bible as a blueprint for human life on Earth as God intended it to be when He put Adam and Eve on the earth to partner with Him as His junior partners in caring for all that He has created.
- To proclaim Jesus Christ, as the only hope for our world, through a demonstration of its daily living and service to all humans' experiential reality of this hope and why it inspires them to offer ourselves and it to the whole world through God's mission.
- To endeavour to cross every human and earthly barrier, in order to challenge and overcome every sin and evil in our world, including all unrighteousness, injustice, poverty, racial, social, cultural, sexual, economic, political, philosophical and ideological powers, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- To gather together, organize, equip, mobilize and support all who respond to faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord into physical, geographical, local churches to reflect Jesus Christ, who's spiritual Body they are, through partnership in God's mission.

- To model the EBCOSA denomination as a miniature reflection of the unity of Christ's Body in which we shall offer an alternative community of biblical love, righteousness, justice, forgiveness, hope and peace for all men and women, boys and girls in a world divided and torn by sin and evil.

### 2.3.1 EBCOSA's structure and governance

The early missionary outreaches and later political oppression and segregation of this racial group have been described above. The EBCOSA is a predominantly coloured denomination with congregations positioned in coloured communities as a result of the Bantu Group Areas Act mentioned above.<sup>31</sup> TEAM reached people in their segregated contexts but failed to integrate the social and spiritual aspects of evangelism (Matham, 1997:14-16). The following section looks at the type of congregation the EBCOSA embodies (in terms of its membership); the governance and leadership (authority and decision making) and also its Constitution (stipulated guidelines for the church).

#### 2.3.1.1 Type of congregation that the EBCOSA embodies

Freedom of religion in post-apartheid South Africa has enabled people the freedom to attend faith communities of their choice with no geographical restrictions of an apartheid regime (Ammerman, 1997: 35). The economic situations of the coloured and black communities have improved as well. This has enabled some of these people opportunities to live outside the previously segregated areas and as such attend churches in these areas. The EBCOSA is a small, close-knit congregation. It is comprised of biological families<sup>32</sup> that are related across South Africa. By relation the researcher means that most of the families that are members of this denomination are actual blood related families living in different regions. Many families have been inter-married making the bonds even stronger in terms of relationship to the church. In a family-sized church everybody knows everybody else intimately and is built around influential families since the heads of these families serve as the nucleus and power base (Hendriks, 2004: 40). Very few of its members are not biologically

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<sup>31</sup> The Western Cape congregations are in Mitchells Plain (2), Strandfontein, Grassy Park, Bonteheuwel, Greenhaven and Atlantis. The Eastern Cape congregations are in Booysens Park, Shauderville and East London. The Natal congregations are in Wentworth, Sparks Estate, Marianridge, Woodlands, Eastwood and Richards Bay. The Gauteng congregations are in Bosmont, Calvary / ZakPark, Eersterust, Eldorado Park, Ennerdale, Florida, Noordgesig, Pescodia (Kimberley), Reiger Park, Riverlea, Southern Suburbs, Westbury and Windmill Park.

<sup>32</sup> By biological families, the researcher refers to families as a group of people who are related to each other by blood or legal ties. It is : 8). It is a group of people united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister; and creating and maintaining a common culture" (Duvall & Muller, 1953:7-8).

related. These families form part of the social profile of vulnerable people in South Africa in which; 1.0% of coloured families are single parent families, 41.4% nuclear, 49.4% blended and 62.6% live in extended families (Statistics SA, 2013: 38). The EBCOSA is comprised of family-sized congregations, which incorporate new members the way a family does: by birth, marriage, and adoption. Local congregations have between twenty-five to one hundred members attending weekly. It is estimated that after sixty years in existence, the EBCOSA has thirty-three active congregations with an average of 2000 members and an uncertain number of adherents<sup>33</sup> accounted for nationally (Matham, 2002:196-197). It is this family dynamic that has maintained its membership despite the economic and social changes that have taken place. Many members travel across communities to remain in fellowship here.

The role of the pastor plays an important part in this family type church. The most influential (in terms of power biologically and financially) families usually occupy leadership positions (Hendriks 2004:39). Ammerman (1997:53-54) describes these relationships as informal networks of power which influence the congregational life through daily habits such as conversations, coffee dates, prayer meetings, potlucks, etc. These networks externally dictate the functioning of the congregation. The pastor serves as a father figure<sup>34</sup> to its members who at many times serves to keep the peace between rivalling groups; has to be available when needed; and should conform to the traditions of the congregation (ibid:40). Most of the pastors remain in a congregation for more than ten years because of the trust and bonds established with these families.

TEAM mission supported its work in South Africa financially since its inception.<sup>35</sup> This financial assistance continued even after missionaries retired; passed away and returned home. This was in the form of ministerial costs, resources and also honorariums to local pastors. Unfortunately, this financial assistance came at the cost of adhering to doctrines and guidelines even after TEAM staff were not physically present. The denomination had to hand in timely reports to the mission organization concerning the South African work. How Sunday services were conducted (worship styles, dress code and programs) were key areas of

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<sup>33</sup> Adherents, regardless of their age, are those by definition who are faithful and loyal worshippers with one of our churches, but who for reasons of age or other, are not ready or unable to take out membership with an EBCOSA church (Revised Constitution, 2009: 7).

<sup>34</sup> The EBCOSA does not allow women to take on pastoral roles based on Scriptural evidence that men are to be the heads to the church and household. Women are, however, allowed to be 'workers' in the various ministries of the congregation (Revised Constitution, 2009:20).

<sup>35</sup> Many mission organizations supported the work they started in South Africa. 1957 was the year the Group Areas consolidation Act. Clause 29 (c) of the Native Laws Amendment Act was passed, which prevented blacks from owning church buildings in white areas (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:267). This was also the reason why all EBCOSA congregations function in low-class coloured areas.

adherence. One of the major implications of international funding (from TEAM) has been an inability of the local church to financially support its pastors after funding was stopped. This has resulted in very few full-time pastors (Matham, 1997 & 2002). Hendriks (2004:40) notes that this type of congregation finds it difficult to become missional in character because much focus is placed on survival due this scarcity of financial and skills support.

The core ministries of this denomination are Sunday worship services; ladies (and sometimes men) ministries; Sunday school; Awana and youth club.

### 2.3.1.2 Governance and leadership

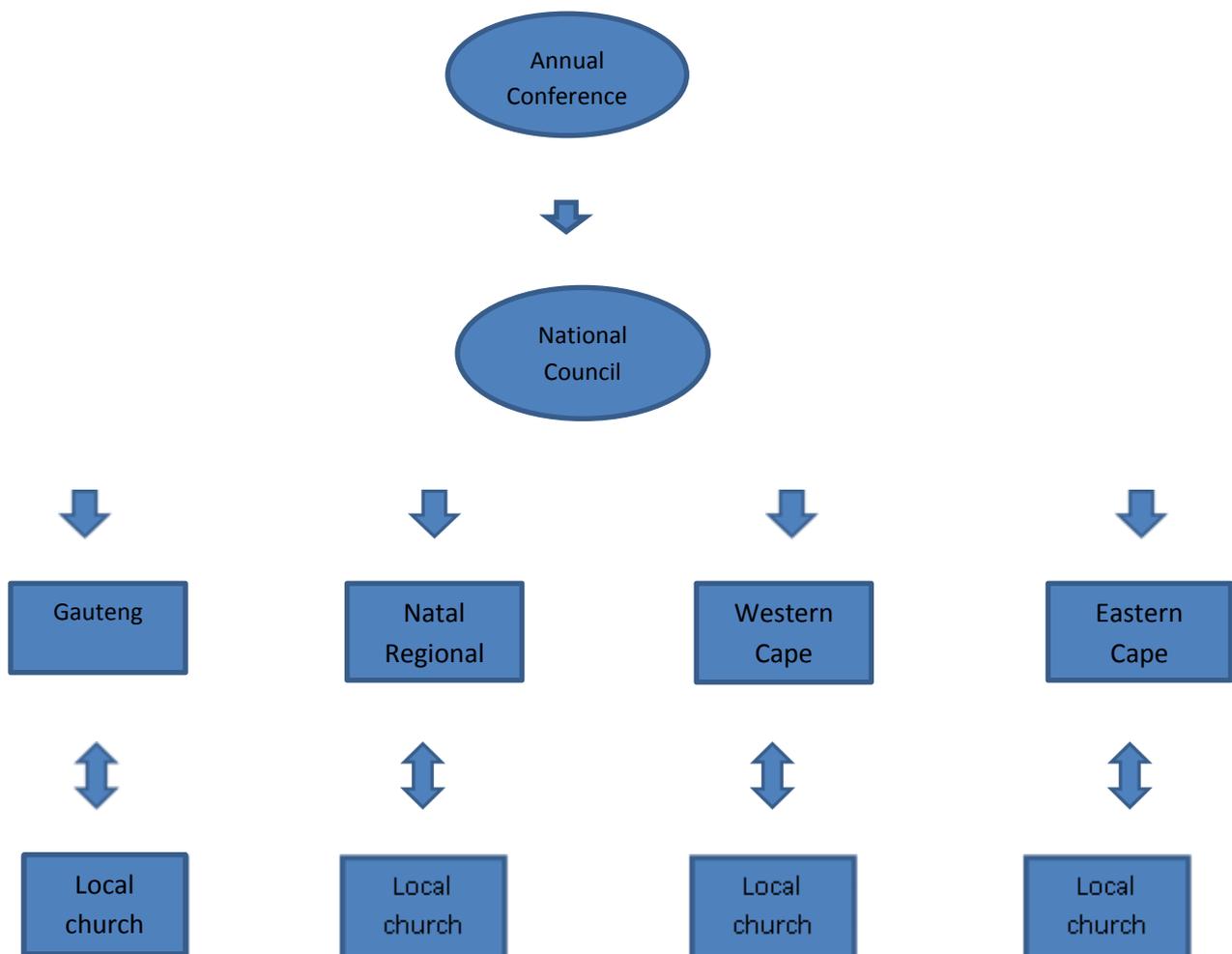


Diagram 1

The vision and mission of the EBCOSA have been noted above. These influence the character and culture of this congregation. However, much of the character and culture of the EBCOSA is evidenced through its governance and leadership structures. The governmental structure of the EBCOSA is vested in local congregations, their church boards, regional councils<sup>36</sup>, a national council<sup>37</sup> and the annual conference<sup>38</sup> (Articles 5 – 9 of the Revised Constitution, 2009: 9-20). The EBCOSA and its member churches subscribe to a married presbyterial and congregational form of church government. Presbyterially, local congregations are governed by pastors, elders and deacons who serve as church boards and are elected by the congregation. Each local congregation is governed by a church board comprising of the pastor, elders and deacons (sometimes deaconesses). Congregationally, each local congregation is self-governing to the extent that it adheres to the constitution and laws passed by the Annual Conference.

The EBCOSA is executively governed by a national council of twelve men from the different regions in which the denomination is active (Port Elizabeth, East London, Richards Bay, Kimberley, Cape Town, Gauteng, Natal, Swaziland and Zimbabwe). Most, if not all these men are pastors of a congregation. The national council meets three times a year and is re-elected every third year. Each of the above-mentioned regions also have its own regional council, comprising of all the pastors and one church leader per congregation. This council is accountable to the national council and meets every second month. A national annual conference is held where matters concerning church politics, governance and order are discussed with all members of the EBCOSA. This conference has decreased in its membership attendance over the years (as reflected in the empirical study). It is not certain whether this could be surmised as a lack of interest in the churches' affairs or an inability to afford the increased costs thereof. Minutes from these meetings and conferences are the only written record of how the church has functioned and what decisions have been made (other than Matham's dissertation) but these are not accessible due to no archive being kept and

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<sup>36</sup> A Regional Council functions in any region where there are two or more churches close enough to each other, to partner with one another in God's mission in their region. Churches who are ready to establish a Regional Council in their region must do so in consultation with each other, after which they apply to the National Council for status as a Regional Council. The National Council shall then make a recommendation to the Annual Conference for approval of same. The present Regional Councils are Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal, Swaziland and the Western Cape (ibid: 14)

<sup>37</sup> The National Council serves as the executive of the Annual Conference. It consists of the Chairmen of each of the Regional Councils, the Chairman of the Missions Board, the Principal of Evangelical Bible College, plus seven suitably qualified members elected annually by our Annual Conference for three year periods (ibid: 16).

<sup>38</sup> The Annual Conference is the legislative assembly of the denomination and is therefore EBCOSA's final authority outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the powers invested in it by the churches. Its office-bearers are the same as those of the National Council in the same year in which the Annual Conference convenes (ibid: 18).

changing secretarial roles over the years. Efforts to preserve these in a more consistent and safe way are in process.

Congregational and denominational decision-making is based on the Presbyterian and congregational forms of governance the EBCOSA adheres to. This is also dependent on whether the congregation is autonomous or not.<sup>39</sup> The local congregation has the power to administer and organize its election of leaders, its finances, the functioning of its local ministries and also its internal policies. The church board serves as the local executive alongside the pastor. Regular reports are given to the regional council who monitors governance and leadership as stipulated in the constitution. The regional council in the same way reports (on the region which is a cluster of congregations) to the national council. Finally, the national council is accountable to the annual conference; who are the members of the denomination (footnotes 33-35).

### 2.3.1.3 The EBCOSA's Constitution

Reference to the constitution of the EBCOSA has been made in earlier sections referring to the EBCOSA's vision, mission and governance structures. This segment of the study is aimed at highlighting those aspects in the Constitution of EBCOSA that have specific reference to the youth in the EBCOSA.

The first constitution of the EBCOSA was drawn up by Reverend Don Aeschliman, an American missionary from TEAM (date not stipulated). This draft placed emphasis on Sunday school, youth, women and leadership as ministerial focus areas (Matham, 2002: 131). The members of the EBCOSA revised this constitution and the statement of faith for the first time in 1990. This constitution is based on the Principles and Practices of TEAM of which the final draft was accepted at an annual conference at Dower College, Port Elizabeth in December 2008. The following components are included in the revised draft (2009): the Statement of Faith; Vision and Mission; Membership; Government; Local Churches; Governance of the Churches; Regional Councils; National Council; Annual Conference;

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<sup>39</sup> An autonomous congregation demonstrates its competence to govern itself independently but partners with the EBCOSA in God's mission and also provides evidence that it has leaders with pastoral and diaconal qualifications and gifts (latent or otherwise) to lead it, motivate and develop its participation in God's mission. (after application to the relevant Regional Council, or the National Council, who acts on its behalf by recommending it to Annual Conference). A non-autonomous congregation is understood as a developing or struggling church which is unable to meet the requirements of being an autonomous one but is nevertheless supervised by a pastor, and/or an Interim Committee, or by the relevant Regional Council or the National Council, (in pursuit of autonomy). It does not have powers to formulate and pass a permanent Policy Document, but may in its development towards autonomy do whatever is necessary to aid such development (Revised Constitution, 2009:10).

Pastors and Workers; Property; the Bible College; Missions Board; Specialized National and Regional Associations and Affiliation, Disaffiliation and Dissolution (Revised Constitution, 2009). Sunday school, youth or women<sup>40</sup> as focus areas of ministry is not mentioned in the constitution of the EBCOSA. It implies that the church would model Christian principles to boys and girls are noted under the vision of this revised constitution but how this is to be implemented is not elaborated on. No mention of youth or children is made in this Constitution. Matham (1997 & 2002) argued that TEAM mission was unsuccessful in implementing holistic discipleship in this denomination. This lack of developing well balanced disciples has stunted the churches vision for its children and youth. On the 15 December 2011, one of the long standing church elders, Adam Johanneson submitted a letter calling for the inclusion of a framework or guidelines for youth ministry in the EBCOSA Constitution to the National Council and Annual Conference (Addendum C). This letter was not given much consideration as other pressing matters needed to be discussed due to time constraints.

### 2.3.2 Theological framework of the EBCOSA

Understanding a denomination's theological framework helps understand how they understand faith and also how this faith is passed onto future generations. Sociologist, Manuel Castells (2004: 6-7) defines identity as the process of constructing meaning through cultural attributes which are not only transferred individually but corporately as well. Castells (ibid: 23-29) adds that corporate (in this instance a denomination) identity is only formed once the values and rituals of this group are internalized. This theological framework influences the denominational identity of the EBCOSA meaning that the faith formation of the youth in this denomination is dependent on the internalization of its theological framework. As a denomination, the EBCOSA makes choices about its collective identity that would enhance its theological framework.

The theological framework of the EBCOSA falls under the tradition of evangelical fundamentalism.<sup>41</sup> Within a fundamentalist perspective, the EBCOSA adheres to the doctrine of Dispensationalism. They believe that all born again believers of all dispensations are in the

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<sup>40</sup> No official mention of the church stance on women in leadership is made in this Constitution.

<sup>41</sup> Evangelical fundamentalism originates from America (Moody, Dwight, Simpson, et al.). It is a strict adherence to a set of principles and beliefs, to a literal interpretation of the Bible which affects all aspects of life and a firm belief that there is only one view of the world possible and their view is the correct one. The leadership is given great authority in this regard (Giddens, 2001:557). The foundational beliefs discussed here are of the EBCOSA are true of this tradition.

Kingdom of God. The EBCOSA understands these dispensations as various arrangements instituted by God in His relationship to humankind – in part, or the whole. The dispensations of Law, Grace and Kingdom occupy the largest place in the Bible (Revised Constitution, 2009: 3 & Ryrie, 2007: 29). They are thus understood as different time periods in which God has been active. Barackman (2001:84), however, describes these as duties assigned to the church for periods of time for which they are accountable to Him. He places emphasis on the duties and not the time. Ryrie (2007:29) believes that the dispensation and age are closely related but not the same whilst Barackman (2001:85) argues that they are indeed different because a God-given duty can extend beyond a specific age. The Church, while part of the Kingdom of God, is not the Kingdom, but is the Body of Christ with Christ as its Head. It began on the Day of Pentecost with the baptism of the Spirit and it is universal, transcending race, gender, language, social status and culture (ibid: 3). A historical contextual approach to Scripture is followed based on different dispensations. Dispensationalism, while an indispensable tool in grasping necessary distinctions in God's dealings with His people promoted isolation from the world (Matham, 1997: 18). The foundational beliefs (as recorded in the statement of faith in article 1 of the Revised Constitution, 2009: 2-4) held by the EBCOSA need to be deliberated prior to a discussion on how this denomination understands the doctrine of faith formation. Key concepts related to how the EBCOSA uses the term faith development (as relevant to faith formation) will also be discussed as this term is not directly referred to in the language of this denomination. These concepts are explored further when discussing faith formation in chapter three of which faith development theory is included. The present discussion is limited to how the EBCOSA understands faith development.

#### 2.3.2.1 Foundational Beliefs<sup>42</sup>

The EBCOSA prides itself as a denomination in which sound biblical teaching is highly prioritized. While all gospel believers agree on what doctrines are Christian, they do not all have the same understanding of these teachings (Barackman, 2001:9). Hendriks (2004: 46-48) describes the proclamation model of a congregation as one born out of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation period. This protestant model has as its basis in the centrality of Scripture, Jesus Christ, a theology of the cross and eschatology. Protestant believers are consequently bound by their belief in the Scriptures and the Christ of the Scriptures and regularly participate in the sacraments to exhibit their faith. The EBCOSA ministers on the basis of this proclamation model. It is an evangelical Protestant church centered on salvific work of Jesus Christ and the

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<sup>42</sup> The scholars referenced under this heading are those used at the Evangelical Bible College where EBCOSA ministers are trained. The researcher assumed (and also through her personal training at this college) these as the core scholars relevant to this context.

inerrant and inspired Bible as the primary witness about Him. It holds to a theology of the cross in which sinners can only be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. As a church, it acknowledges its fallibility and places much emphasis on teaching the Word of God. It holds faith, sacraments and its evangelistic missionary thrust as its core (Revised Constitution, 2009).

According to the Statement of Faith of the EBCOSA, theological *doctrine*<sup>43</sup> is understood and taught as thought or expression of thought about God (Barackman, 2001:14 & 19). It believes that believers are accountable to God both in the present and in the future through the judgment seat (Ryrie, 1986:9-10).

The EBCOSA believes in a *triune God and an inerrant Word of God*. There is one eternal, self-existent, true and living God, who possesses absolutely all the natural and moral attributes of deity. These include, among other attributes, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, truth, holiness, justice, love, and mercy. This God is infinitely perfect and exists eternally as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Revised Constitution, 2008: 3 & Barackman, 2001: 60-61).

The EBCOSA believes in the entire *Bible*, consisting of 66 books, is the revealed Word of God. Given by special revelation and recorded by inspiration of the Spirit, we accept the Bible as inerrant in the original writings and faithfully preserved and transmitted through the ages. As such, it is the final and authoritative basis for faith, and practice, and operates effectually in salvation, sanctification and service (Revised Constitution, 2009:3 & Barackman, 2001: 14 & 27). Based on a dispensationalist perspective towards the Bible, the Bible is interpreted in a normal, plain and literal manner (Ryrie, 1986:15 & Barackman, 2001: 87).

The EBCOSA believes that *Salvation* is the total work of God in bringing people from condemnation to justification (Ryrie, 1986:277, 2007:124 & Barackman, 2001: 352). In the Old Testament salvation was understood as liberation or deliverance through Yahweh using human men. This deliverance was corporate and individual. Faith was seen as a necessary condition. Faith in God meant that one did what was pleasing to Him so that you were not cut off from the family of God. In the New Testament salvation was seen as the preservation from

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<sup>43</sup> Words written in italics in the paragraphs that follow are specific sections listed in the statement of faith of this denomination.

danger or death. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who, without any change in His eternal deity and equality with God, became man through the miracle of the virgin birth. His voluntary and vicarious death on the cross provided a perfect and complete salvation for all mankind. The EBCOSA believes that Christ rose again bodily from the dead, and that His resurrection is the divine seal of His completed atonement. On the basis of Christ's atoning death and resurrection all who place their trust in Him is declared righteous before God. He ascended to Heaven and sits at the right hand of God where He ever lives to serve as our High Priest and Advocate, making intercession to God for us. Salvation affects the whole person. The Holy Spirit is a person and not a mere force. He is truly God and He shares equally all the attributes belonging to the Father and the Son (Revised Constitution, 2009: 3). At salvation the believer is reconciled to God through faith. Man needs to be reconciled by changing his position about Christ and only then, is his condition before God changed. One can only be reconciled to God through faith. This faith is evidenced in a holy life and also through works before men (Ryrie: 1986:294- 300 & Barackman, 2001: 86, 158, 351-352). The doctrine of salvation cannot be separated from the doctrines of sanctification, regeneration and justification (Barackman, 2001: 350).

The EBCOSA believes that the *Church* exists to fulfill God's mission on earth which is to make disciples of all nations. Local churches are visible representations of the universal Church, and are responsible to execute God's mission on earth in partnership with other local churches of like faith (Revised Constitution, 2009:4 & Barackman, 2001:413). All these doctrines are interdependent on each other when it comes to understanding the EBCOSA's theological framework, which in essence also explains its character as a denomination. These also have an impact on how they understand how young people come to faith and thereafter develop into mature Christians. The foundational beliefs of the church (as listed above) have an inevitable impact on how it views and practises youth ministry. Attention is now shifted to how they conceptualize faith development. The concepts faith, spiritual growth, spiritual maturity and discipleship<sup>44</sup> are the key terms the EBCOSA use and these will be validated by the scholars they align their doctrinal teachings with.

#### 2.3.2.2 Terms relevant to faith development

The language a faith community uses to express its faith is one of the ways these communities connect its members with God (Ammerman, 1997:60). In this regard, it is

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<sup>44</sup> All these concepts are discussed again in chapter four because they are referred to by academics in the field of faith development as well. This section is limited to EBCOSA's understanding thereof.

important to gain an understanding of the theological language the EBCOSA's uses around the term faith prior to unpacking how they conceptualize as faith development.

i) Faith

It was mentioned that the EBCOSA adhere to a dispensationalist theology, and this theology includes its doctrinal teachings on faith. Ryrie (1986:326- 327 & 2007) describes faith as having confidence in God's salvific work to remove sins; a reliance on God and it is a channel and not a source. He notes that there are different components of faith, namely; intellectual, emotional and volitional faith. Intellectual faith knows about God but this alone cannot save one. Emotional faith is feeling connected to God but can end up being only temporal depending on one's mood. This could lead to faith being limited to one's circumstances. Volitional faith is the act of believing. Barackman (2001: 213, 382, 528) calls this ministerial, natural and practical faith which coincides with the faith cube proposed in chapter three (Fowler, Niebuhr, Dean, et al). All these are needed to have saving faith. Saving faith is a reliance on the truth of the Gospel as revealed in God's Word (Ryrie, 1986:327). Ryrie (2007: 134) further argues that a dispensationalist perspective of faith means that the contents of faith changes according to the different dispensations and when God chooses to reveal these to His people. He terms this progressive revelation. For this reason, the EBCOSA believes that one cannot be a Christian without being saved through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37, Acts 11: 16-17 & Romans 8:9). To be natural is to be unsaved and not to have the Holy Spirit. Having the Spirit characterizes all born- again people (Ryrie, 1986: 355). Barackman (2001:337) confirms repentance of sin, acceptance of the gospel message and, trust in God's atoning work as essential to this faith.

ii) Spirituality/Spiritual Growth/ Spiritual Maturity

The terms spirituality and more so spiritual growth are often used simultaneously to faith formation (chapter three). These terms are connected to the doctrine of salvation as described earlier. The EBCOSA believes that one's spirituality is marked by a mature, yet maturing, relationship with God (Ryrie, 1986: 375). Spiritual growth is a progressive development in certain areas of one's spiritual life (Barackman, 2001:375). Spirituality in this instance is three-fold. It involves being regenerated, God's ministry in one's life and the time needed to grow. The doctrine of regeneration emphasizes the act of being reborn as a Christian (according to 2 Corinthians 5:17-21) in which one's old habits are progressively changed to God-honoring ones. Spiritual maturity is being able to (1) discern God's will and perspective; (2) prayer according to this will; (3) exercise your spiritual gifts and (4) wage war against

powers of faith. It is not based on the length of time you have been saved as all believers regardless of age, continue to mature. There are stages of maturity. An important part of spiritual maturity is recognizing, acknowledging and using one’s spiritual gifts. The fullness of the Spirit is reached as control is to be yielded to Holy Spirit. This means that the believer becomes intentional about growing in their faith (Barackman, 2001: 375). This is evidenced in Christlikeness which is living a life that reflects the fruit of Spirit (Gal 5: 22- 23) in daily life experiences and circumstances. It is an expression of praise, inner attitude of worship, life of worship and submissiveness in relationships (parent/child or husband/wife or slave/master) (Ryrie: 1986: 370- 380 & Barackman, 2001: 375). The diagram below depicts the process of spiritual maturity as adhered to by EBCOSA:

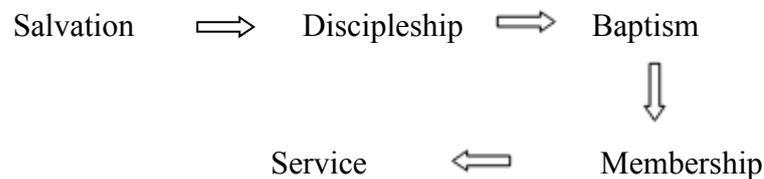


Diagram 2

The first step is Salvation (as explained earlier). Then follows the process of Sanctification (understood as conversion), there must be establishment in the faith through being taught what one’s relationship to the body of Christ is. This is done through entrusting the Holy Spirit to grow his disciples (Mortenson, 1994: 29). Discipleship can easily be confused as spiritual growth. This term has been further investigated by Dr. Matham (2002), in his doctoral dissertation on TEAM’s discipling ministry among the coloured people of Swaziland and South Africa. In reaction to the dominant role TEAM mission has played in this denomination, the research question Matham asks is ‘To what extent has the discipling ministry of TEAM in Southern Africa produced disciples with a holistic perspective on the Christian mission?’ His findings are extremely relevant to this dissertation and to the EBCOSA’s understanding of faith development. This fundamental discipling ministry will now be discussed in more detail.

Marlin Olsen, the TEAM missionary who founded the EBCOSA, viewed and taught personal salvation and church planting as the primary task of discipleship (Matham, 2002: 124). This resulted in a segregation of spiritual and secular ministry. Others working alongside him in Swaziland believed in sharing the gospel through sharing a skill. In the Principles and practice of TEAM, converts are encouraged to be examples of the gospel

through studying the Bible, getting involved in ministry (serving the church) and also by giving financially to the church (in Matham, 2002: 26-27). The congregational model advocated at the time was a partnership between TEAM and nationals but any social ministry was discouraged. What was lacking was a clear theology of discipling that would biblically reconcile the vertical and horizontal dimensions of discipling (Matham, 2002: 129).

The word discipleship is not mentioned in the Old Testament but the principle of obedience to God's law through His relationship with Israel serves as an example of discipleship. Through testimony of Israel's transformation, many nations would obey God. From a dispensational perspective this practice bore continuity through to the New Testament (Matham, 2002: 47). In the Old Testament, discipleship was the priority of the family (Deuteronomy 4:10). The parental example of what it meant to be disciples or learners was based on submission to God. The whole nation of Israel was included in the discipleship process. In the EBCOSA, willingness (MacArthur, 1988) along with baptism and daily instruction (Ryrie, 1986) are prerequisites of discipleship (Matham, 2002: 97). This assumes that a growing Christian has made a conscious, personal commitment to their faith and as a result of this has publicly been baptized through obedience to consistent reading of Scripture. Discipleship is also about character development as one transition from seeking God to daily experiences of salvation (Wilkins, 1992:118). It is also a lifestyle consistent with apostolic teaching concerning the Christian (Matham, 2002: 102). Barackman (2001:394) argues that discipleship is a spiritual discipline that is to continue throughout one's life. It is a commitment to God's reign, to justice and love and obedience to the entire will of God (Bosch 1991:81). Discipleship, in the EBCOSA, can be defined as total obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, as that obedience is worked out in all of life, not only in the spiritual realm (Matham, 2002: 116 & Barackman, 2001: 394). John MacArthur (1998: 97-113) adds that discipleship also includes spending time with the one being disciplined as Christ did with His disciples. This time spent (mentoring) goes beyond scheduled meetings to the daily life of the one doing the discipling. The disciple learns how this person spends their time, conducts his or her relationships, manages conflict, etc. This mentoring relationship exhibits that commitment requires that the disciple prioritizes Christ above all other relationships (family and peers). The disciples' goals in life are replaced with what God has planned for this life. The EBCOSA associates spiritual growth as part of discipleship as the process of learning with spiritual maturity as the ultimate goal (Barackman, 2001:376).

Matham's conclusion was that TEAM basically executed its own narrowed understanding of the task of making disciples (2002: iii) as Olsen failed to focus on the lordship of Christ over the whole being of a person. Consequently, missionaries did not incorporate all aspects of people's growth along with their faith journey. According to Matham, the EBCOSA's focus was always on reaching its own (coloured people) specific group. This narrow focus was strengthened by the separation of the race groups. Thus Christians were trained to think of the Lord's work exclusively as the congregations' goals (Matham, 2002: 137). Matham's dissertation revealed that missionaries associated discipleship with personal experiences and perspectives of ministry in South Africa and not necessarily biblical perspectives. What is clear is that there is a need to formulate a theology of discipling the nations which will be faithful to the whole counsel of God, and also relevant to the current situation in Southern Africa (Matham, 2002:33 & 202). This is evident in the young people of this denomination. Youth faith formation in the EBCOSA has not taken the biblical role of discipleship seriously because these youth have been present but have not been guided and equipped appropriately. As a result of this lack of interest in their faith formation process, numbers of young people in this denomination have diminished.

Baptism through being immersed into water follows after having being discipled as a public sign of one's faith. In the EBCOSA, water baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church until Christ returns. While water baptism cannot save from sin, it is a physical, visible, celebratory picture of the one is baptism by the Spirit into union with Christ and His Church which occurred at conversion (Revised Constitution, 2008:3 & Barackman, 2001: 426-427).

Membership usually happens alongside baptism but can occur individually if one has previously been baptized. This is a process in which one is taken through the teachings of the church and if in agreement aligns oneself with the denomination. Thereafter one is deemed suitable to get involved in varying forms of *service*. God has enriched His Church with the gifts of the Spirit. Such divine gifts are enablement for service to the Body of Christ and to the world. They are not for personal glory or edification, but are intended for the edification of Christ's Body (Revised Constitution, 2009:2).

The Holy Spirit is a person and his ministry is to glorify the Father and the Son as He effectually applies the saving work of Christ to believing sinners by convicting them of sin, righteousness and judgment, and imparting the new birth to those who believe, thus making

them children of God. Since the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit permanently indwells born-again Christians, who, at their conversion, are baptized by the Spirit once for all into the Body of Christ, the Church. He daily convicts Christians of anything that displeases God, and by His infilling, He empowers Christians for victorious life and service as they carry out God's mission on earth (ibid: 5). As one matures, his knowledge and perspectives will deepen and broaden. New areas that need to be yielded (to the Holy Spirit) will come to light. Therefore, filled people need to be filled as they continue to mature in the Lord. But no believer can afford not to be filled at every stage of his or her spiritual growth. The Holy Spirit helps one grow spiritually through teaching, guiding, assuring and praying (Ryrie, 1986: 378 - 380).

The EBCOSA affirms that the spiritual growth of a believer takes place in various ways. The researcher has termed these disciplines as modes of transferring faith<sup>45</sup>. These modes are key activities a believer in Christ participates in, in order to strengthen one's relationship with God and also the church. The modes of spiritual growth in the EBCOSA are the breaking of bread (Communion), worship, praise, prayer, testimony, the ministry of the Word, discipline and sharing the Gospel (TEAM Principles & practices, 1995:26-27 in Matham, 2002). These are similar to the description of Christlikeness mentioned earlier. This means that each person needs to take personal responsibility for their spiritual growth after conversion.

The concepts (language) that the EBCOSA uses in relation to the term faith development have been discussed through reflecting on theoretical sources and empirical voices from this research study. Ammerman (1997:36) stresses that it is important for a congregation's implicit theology (theological framework) to be integrated with its explicit theology (resources and also congregational practices). The EBCOSA has never had a problem with the former but requires a revival of the latter. This study intends on assisting this faith community in this regard. Attention is now shifted to how youth ministry specifically has developed in this denomination and also to what the present state thereof is.

#### 2. 4 Youth ministry within the EBCOSA

The youth of the 1970s played a significant role in bringing about democracy in South Africa. This was despite the fact that the apartheid government gave no special attention to matters relating to the youth. Moreover through its policies it denied the majority of young

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<sup>45</sup> These modes are elaborated on in chapter three of this dissertation.

men and women opportunities to develop as young people and transit into meaningful adulthood. In recognition and acknowledgement of the impact of apartheid legacy on the youth, the democratic government sought to prioritize youth matters in the reconstruction and development of the country (n.a, 2006:5). The social formation of communities impacts the life of ministry in local congregations (Ammerman, 1997:2-3). The brief reflection on South African history and also on the state of youth within this country has reflected the negative impact on the familial, educational and social contexts of the youth. Youth could not go to school because of violent riots. Many young people were left at home without any adult supervision and care, since parents spent a great deal of time at work. Leaving the confines of home was unsafe due to increased violence and crime. Violence and power imbalances escalated affecting and involving many South African youth. The displacement and inequalities towards coloured, black and Indian youth affected the quality of education they received resulting in poor or uncertain career opportunities. It also led to many youth in this country resorting to violence themselves, many who were involved in boycotts and mass action campaigns (Swartz, 2004:2-3). This generation of young people (formerly known as Generation X) became the parents of the youth discussed in this dissertation. Many young people were also involved in the apartheid struggle in South Africa (Siebel & Nel, 2012: 4-6).

The circumstances described above (and earlier in this chapter) have had rippled effects on the socio-economic circumstances of the young people from this predominantly coloured denomination. The EBCOSA ministers to youth within the social context of South Africa. This context and the varying influences within it are important when investigating the factors that influence the faith formation of the youth within the EBCOSA. The brief description of the state of young people in South Africa given in chapter one provides a description of the youth being discussed in this dissertation. It would be naïve to think that the youth interviewed in this study are not involved in some of the destructive behaviours (drug usage, suicide, smoking, etc.). With this societal background in mind, attention is now given to the historical development of youth ministry within the EBCOSA and how this history has impacted youth ministry at present. These are also explored during the empirical study and the findings thereof are elaborated on later in this study (chapter four and five) as relevant to the theory explored (chapter three).

#### 2.4.1 History and Development of youth ministry in EBCOSA

This dissertation focusses on youth between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years old. An understanding of how youth ministry developed (abroad and in South Africa) according to different age groups is now important to understanding why this particular age is crucial within faith formation research. The history of youth ministry as a theological discipline is also important when considering youth ministry within the EBCOSA. Henceforth the history and development of youth ministry will be expounded.

The age at which young people became youth has been under debate for many years. Age specific youth ministry cannot be discussed without considering adolescence as a life-stage (Root, 2007:26). Debates about whether this phenomenon was linked to biological and intellectual development, to a specific age or to social activities like school attendance or work continued for centuries. At this point it is important to note that youth ministry seeks to theologically and developmentally understand the needs of youth (Dean, et al, 2001:46- 49). Andrew Root (2011:126-129), a Lutheran practical theologian having conducted much research on youth ministry, sees adolescence as a time in life for possibility. As youth wrestle through a journey of nothingness by exploring their identity the reality of possibility in Christ through all the development taking place in and around them becomes an awareness that could lead to a fulfilled life in Christ. From an African perspective, Saneta Maiko (2007:12-65), a Kenyan pastor who studied practical theology in America describes adolescence as a time where youth are experiencing initiation rites and rituals that prepare them for adulthood. It is also now when earlier life experiences play a formative role in shaping their personality. A healthy adolescence depends to a large extent on healthy infant and childhood rearing. Adolescence is also marked by hypocritical comments from adults. The end of this stage is marked by successfully completing the rituals and sense of confirmed self-esteem. Maiko notes mid- adolescence (15- 17 years old) as the age at which young people are most likely making life-long decisions about God because they have the capacity for epistemologically understanding faith. The exact age of adolescence is debatable especially in an African context. Sociologist, Erik Erikson (1960) placed adolescence at the age of eleven to twenty-five years old at a time when youth figure out who they are. Besides puberty starting earlier, social networks have disrupted the projected stages of adolescence (Powell, et al, 2011:55). Adolescence, understood as being youth including the ages of fourteen to seventeen years old, is a time when young people contemplate who they are based on how they want others to perceive them. This period in a young person's life is characterized by pubertal maturation, identity formation and much self- awareness. Time spent with parents is now replaced with time spent with peers. Chap Clark (in Dean et al, 2001) a practical theologian focusing on

youth and family ministry, notes that adolescence should not be considered as either a physical change, or psychological changes, or a sociological change but as all of these. Clark adds that the youth ministry models originating in the early twentieth century need to change because the age at which these developmental changes are occurring has decreased. This would then also influence discussions on faith formation of these youth, which will be discussed in this dissertation.

Youth and youth culture have been terms that many academics (Dean, Mueller, Cloete, Nel, etc.) have wrestled with because there was confusion whether to focus on youth behaviour or their age. The reality however is that youth have grown as an entity within society. Swaying from attending to their needs within the culture they live by would be naïvity from society and also the faith communities ministering to these youth (Cloete, 2012: 2-3). Age specific youth ministry only began in the late nineteenth century. It can be traced to the period of conservative Protestant evangelicalism in America. This period was characterised as a time when youth were encouraged towards personal conversion forsaking all other interests which were considered worldly (Root, 2007:30). Youth ministry in South Africa can be traced to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century when for the first time youth lived and worked outside their parents homes (Nel, 1998:51). Evangelical leaders such as Robert Raikes (who began the YMCA<sup>46</sup>) started Sunday school because he was concerned that youth were overworked and undereducated. This Sunday school was not the same as is known today. It focussed on teaching youth to read and write and also basic manners and morals. It was basically filling the educational gaps these youth had. Churches later adopted this way of reaching out to youth by establishing their own schools (as in the case of the EBCOSA) but added an emphasis on spiritual commitment as well. Denominational youth societies originated from these schools. This was about the same time the Christelike Jongeliede Vereniging and the Christelike Stewers were founded in Wellington, South Africa (Nel, 1998:52).

Modernity brought along changes that the conservative evangelicals resisted. Some (referred to as liberal) engaged with psychology, evolutionary theory and literary criticism to explain how Protestantism was relevant to these changes in modern society. Others (referred to as fundamentalists) viewed these changes as detrimental to the Christian faith and resorted to Protestantism's core tradition; biblical authority. This resulted in exclusiveness and the development of dispensationalist theology which justified why Christians should be separated

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<sup>46</sup> Young Men's Christian Association.

from society (Root, 2007:36-37). The EBCOSA adhere to a fundamentalist dispensationalist theology. Schools and Bible colleges were started to maintain this exclusivity in its members and to protect its youth from modern pressures. Francis Clark, a fundamentalist, started the first Young People's Society for Christian Endeavour in 1881. This society was aimed at organizing social events for youth and emphasized personal conversion and Bible study as ways to stay committed. This model developed into what is now known across the world as Youth for Christ and Scripture Union. Youth ministry developed into crusades, rallies, sport ministries and later (1950's) to individual relational ministries. Popular evangelists such as Billy Graham and Jim Rayburn were involved in many of these campaigns. The 1970 to 1990's found many youth calling for smaller group types of ministry (Root, 2007:55). Popular youth culture was fragmented with the increase in breakdowns of the family structures. Many homes were broken as a result of industrialization. This was when the need to for youth leaders became evident. As is the case in the EBCOSA, youth leaders were male and focussed on evangelism to youth within their congregational contexts. Youth ministry in South Africa followed similar trends as that of the Netherlands, Germany and America. Youth development work was seen as the work of voluntary youth workers and pastoral care to youth was seen as the work of the congregation (Nel, 1998:53-55).

As noted earlier, the history of youth ministry and its connection to the notion of adolescence is crucial to this research study because of the age group (14-17 years old) focussed on here and also because of the connection this age group has to discourses on faith formation. The close connection this history has to evangelicalism is also crucial to this research study because the empirical study conducted here is on an evangelical faith community that is aligned with the evangelical history of youth ministry. Chapter five of this dissertation call for a practical theology of youth ministry within an evangelical South African context and as such reflects on this chapter.

It was mentioned that the first evangelistic endeavors to the EBCOSA were in the form of education in Swaziland. Through establishing a school, children were given an education resulting in parents drawing closer creating opportunities for the gospel to be shared. The parents became Christians who then continued the work. It was also mentioned earlier that the first constitution included Sunday school and youth ministry whilst the most recent one does not. The Strategic plan of TEAM (2001: 3-5) for the South African ministry area shows that young families with children were targeted for establishing churches but not much has been noted on what the strategy to minister to the children was. Church-based

training was aimed at equipping leaders of Sunday schools but the aims thereof were not specified. Mission was to be promoted in Sunday schools but the process thereof was not elaborated on. How this mission organization strategically evangelized and disciplined youth has not been clear in the records held nor in the historical testimonies of the denomination.

The EBCOSA was founded in the early 1950's. This was also the time that the Students' Christian Association, Scripture Union, Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association and Youth for Christ became active in South Africa. These interdenominational youth organizations were also divided along racial lines because of the law preventing mixed worship that was passed in 1957 (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994: 263).

The Genheimers, a missionary couple from America, focused on ministry to children and youth through Bible clubs and camps in Natal (Saunders, 2013:1). Many older folk, including the pastors, report (Willenberg, 2013:1) having being part of these ministries. Marlin Olsen viewed this form of children's ministry as a channel into the church work yet interestingly reported great response to the Gospel from youth and adults alike. The success of children's ministry to Olsen was in that they were now growing up and entering into the church (Olsen in Matham, 2002: 136 -138). The researcher's efforts in trying to trace newsletters from the Genheimers to understand what their perceptions on children and youth ministry were, failed. What is known was that they were not TEAM missionaries but SIM (Serving in Mission) missionaries assisting TEAM in Natal.

Reports from church leaders and pastors portray that young people were involved in the early mission work of the denomination. Pastors (Louw, Saunders & Matham) report that youth were very active in the early church planting endeavors of the church, many of whom became the pastors (Willenberg, 2013:1) Reports (Louw, 2013:3) from people having grown up in this denomination, recall many regional and national youth camps, youth coffee bars, fun day events and great numbers of youth attending the Annual Conferences. The ministry of Bible Band and Wayside Sunday school seems to have been the highlights. Sunday school classes were even held in members' homes. Youth was not merely a Friday night occurrence. Many of the present day pastors (Matham, Hartze, and Vandayar) also recall older men and women in the congregation who walked alongside them as young people and mentored them. Neville Willenberg (2013:2), a respected elder in the denomination reports that there was a time (1968) when the Regional council mandated young men to do outreach in the local communities of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

The researcher<sup>47</sup> recalls growing up into a ministry to children, called AWANA (approved workmen are not ashamed) clubs.<sup>48</sup> Many young people and adults have gone through this ministry. This ministry is still active in a few of the congregations but has ceased in most churches. The researcher was also involved in a regional youth ministry called CYAG (Christian Youth in Action Group). CYAG was a regional committee responsible for the training and organization of events for all the youth clubs in the EBCOSA in the Western Cape. These events were aimed at combining these youth. CYAG also supported the youth leaders in areas they were struggling in. Most of this ministry was and still is the burden of the missionary or youth leader and not the church resulting in the cessation of many of these youth activities.

#### 2.4.2 Present state of Youth ministry in EBCOSA

Post- apartheid South Africa is now a country where there is no shortage of churches to attend on a Sunday. There are as many different liturgical traditions and doctrinal teachings as there are cultures. Spirituality is publicly encouraged through various media forms (television, radio, internet, advertisements, et al). Unfortunately these are focused on personal spirituality and not the importance of fellowship for this spirituality to develop. Much of what the media portrays as Christianity is not necessarily sound biblical principles. People are discouraged from church fellowship and encouraged to serve God in their personal spaces at the expense of growing through the accountability of other Christians. Christianity gives the impression to be fixated on a spirituality that is focused on self and an increasing disregard for tradition and collectivity (Smit, 2009:412).

Globalization and networks between the African church and the rest of the world have made great impressions on the church as a receiver of international funding. The mission industry has become a lucrative one not validating the local church (Smit, 2009:413). Sadly, external funding along with a missionary dictatorship has not invested in societal issues of the country but has segregated churches even more. In many ways the impact on the church was much stronger than the impact of the church on society (Smit, 2009:415). This societal culture has also influenced the way youth experience and live their faith.

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<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that the researcher is used here but the experiences described were not uniquely experienced by her but by many young people before her.

<sup>48</sup> Awana clubs international is an interdenominational evangelical mission organization aimed at reaching boys and girls with the gospel. It does this through a structured program in which games, Bible memory and group devotions are practised.

While many older black South Africans played a part in the struggle for liberation, it is the younger South Africans who are experiencing political, if not economic, freedoms. Chapter one describes post-apartheid South Africa has been classified as a youthful country as young people account for more than 60% of the country's population (Stats SA, 2012:18). Many of these youth are referred to as Mandela children (youth who are fifteen years old in 2005 were born in the year that Nelson Mandela was released from prison: 1990) would have been between four or five years old during the country's first democratic elections and would not have known apartheid or the struggle for South Africa's liberation. They were still children during the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Their parents in turn were more likely to have been in primary or than high school during the school boycotts of 1976, and although some may have been involved in the student and youth political struggles of the eighties and early nineties, they are just as likely to have been spectators in the struggle (Swartz, 2004:5).

The young people being ministered to in the EBCOSA are the same youth being described in chapter one. As a coloured community, these youth also live with the many injustices placed upon their families during the apartheid regime. According to the South African Council of Churches (n.a: 51-54); 87.2% of 15 – 17 years old coloured youth attend primary and high school; 27.1% attend a higher education institution and 16.6% attend a FET college. The top two reasons why South Africa youth do not attend school are no finances (38.9%) and parental unemployment (20.4%). Youth are not supported by the social safety nets that are available to children and older people (SACC, 59). According to a Statistics SA (2012:18) report on South African children, 12.2% of 15 – 19 years old youth are mothers. In terms of race; 52% of the Western Cape's, 6.9% of the Eastern Cape, 1.5 % of Natal and 2.8% of Gauteng's youth population are coloured (Stats SA, 2013:36). There is increasing pressure on the church and its leadership to develop strategies for ministry that would meet the depth of youth ministry needs and challenges (drugs, unemployment, crime, etc.) these youth encounter.

This becomes ever more pressing in a denomination like the EBCOSA in which resources in are limited. Many local congregations do not have youth clubs or a formal youth ministry because of insufficient leadership. People are afraid of availing themselves because the local congregation does not have the finances and administrative support to sustain these ministries, resulting in past leadership being burnt out. The lack of resources for youth

ministry in the EBCOSA can also be connected to the manner in which TEAM understood youth ministry and as such failed to prioritize it. Local pastors, regional councils, national council and annual conference have not been equipped to plan and develop youth ministry. As noted earlier, Olsen's narrow view of youth as a feeder to the church led to insufficient discipleship of young people; a pattern which still continues today.

There is no official policy on youth ministry or youth leadership development in the EBCOSA. There is also no consensus as to what age constitutes youth in this denomination. During 2009, two young pastors, Anton Jacobs and Llewellyn Saville drafted a letter of recommendations (Addendum D) for children and youth ministry in the EBCOSA for all the national churches. The following recommendations regarding the spiritual development (faith formation) of children and youth were made:

- All children and youth workers in the EBCOSA receive some type of formal theological instruction.
- Church leaders apply a more careful and biblical approach when appointing youth and children's leaders. A policy document that contains an appointment procedure, which includes qualification criteria like Christian character, spiritual gifts, maturity, training, etc., may be helpful for each local church to have.
- Youth leaders should be encouraged or mandated perhaps to attend winter school<sup>49</sup> where special lectures could be taught in order to address specific youth related issues. Here national initiatives like camps and outreaches like short-term missions could be planned and finalized.
- Set up a national "Youth Help Line" as a counselling and prayer support for parents, pastors, youth, and youth leaders in any situation and on any youth related issue.
- Develop and establish a national resource center for both children and youth ministries.

These recommendations are specific to developing the youth leadership to address the faith formation of these youth. They do not speak specifically to what the processes of faith formation should entail. There are currently thirteen youth groups (from thirty-three congregations) active in the EBCOSA. This reality was discovered whilst conducting research

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<sup>49</sup> Winter school is an annual event hosted by the Evangelical Bible College aimed at the continuous theological training of all pastors and church leaders. This winter camp is compulsory for pastors to attend.

in preparation for the empirical study. The individual congregations were contacted in search of youth groups or youth to interview but many turned the researcher away saying that they have no youth or haven't had youth for a long time. One of the youth groups included in the empirical study has closed since. The active youth groups take the form of Friday or Saturday night meetings in which praise and worship, games and devotions seem to be the general format. Some have weekly Bible study groups, some are still hosting camps but not as regions as was reported in the past. Each region used to have a regional youth committee where youth related activities were regularly discussed, this too has discontinued. Some youth groups are engaging their young people in community projects, and some have become children's ministry leaders. Regions no longer get the youth together for youth combined services. This event encouraged all the EBCOSA, and sometimes other groups, youth groups within a specific region to get together for fellowship and instruction. Youth day (June 16) events and rallies have not been taking place as was the case in the past.

It is the researcher's assumption that one of the reasons for these changes is that the faith formation process (as described in diagram 1 of 2.3.1.2 above) in the ministry to youth in the EBCOSA has not been given priority. Even though education was an initial concern (as was for the rest of the country), faith formation of the young people has not been taken seriously. Program-orientated ministry took priority over Christ-orientated ministry.<sup>50</sup> This assumption is tested through an empirical study conducted with the remaining youth groups which will be elaborated on in chapters four and five of this dissertation.

## 2.5 Conclusion

A brief historical account of how Christianity has developed in South Africa was deemed integral to understanding the context out of which the EBCOSA was founded. The social systems active around this denomination have influenced the faith formation processes of its youth and broader membership. The racial segregations reinforced by mission outreach during the periods of colonization and apartheid have also had implications of the post-apartheid situation this denomination finds itself in. The influence TEAM has had on the EBCOSA's denominational structure, governance and theological framework has been discussed. TEAM used education as the means by which the gospel was shared with coloured

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<sup>50</sup> Program orientated youth ministry is focussed on developing (and maybe entertaining) programs that are best suited to the needs young people have. These are dynamic and change as these needs change. Christ-orientated youth ministry is focussed on creating spaces in which youth experience a relationship with Christ. Attention to biblical teaching and discipleship is given when using this type of ministry (Dean, et al, 2001: 341-348).

and black people resulting in this denomination being predominantly coloured. This was done through the establishment of mission schools and Bible colleges as a reflection of the church planting model used for early missionary work in South Africa. The EBCOSA is structured according to a family-growth model which relies on biological reproduction as its main strategy for church growth. It is governed by a combined presbyterial and congregational form of governance. In practice, the order of authority given lies within the annual conference, national council, congregational boards and congregational members. The theological framework of the EBCOSA is based on a dispensationalist, conservative, fundamentalist perspective to which the American based mission (TEAM) adhered. It was noted that this perspective became popular in poverty stricken and politically divided contexts around the world. This framework included the theological language the EBCOSA uses through reflecting on key concepts used to describe faith formation, namely; salvation, discipleship, baptism, membership and service.

A brief reflection on the state of youth in South Africa was deemed necessary when considering youth ministry in the EBCOSA. The coloured and black youth that make up the youth in this denomination have been subjected to the influences of the colonial and apartheid eras of this country. How TEAM founded this denomination also impacted the lack of priority placed on youth ministry. It was argued that this denomination has not taken the faith formation of its youth seriously. This is evidenced in how youth ministry along with its structures and leadership has been neglected through lack of youth ministry foci in TEAM's ministerial succession plan for this denomination. Program orientated youth ministry has been one of the reasons why present church leaders have not prioritized the thorough discipleship process exhibited in diagram 2 (under heading 2.3.2.2). Failure to consider suggestions made by three of its leaders has been another reason for this demise.

Chapter three explores interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives on faith formation in an attempt to answer the question: why this is going on in the EBCOSA as far as the faith formation of its fourteen to seventeen year olds are concerned.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONCEPT OF FAITH FORMATION**

#### 3.1 Introduction

The interpretive task is aimed at explaining why certain patterns and dynamics have developed within the context. This is done through reflection on the cultural and congregational context by means of understanding the relevant theories at work within these contexts. An interdisciplinary discussion takes place during accomplishing this task by discussing relevant theories from the disciplines of psychology, sociology and theology in an attempt to understand and explain why the EBCOSA is experiencing the challenges it has concerning the faith formation of its youth. Practical theological interpretation is deeply contextual and thinks in terms of interconnections, relationships and systems. It creates a bridge between the academy and the church and also between academic disciplines (Osmer, 2008: 17). The interpretive task can be aligned with World 2 of Johann Mouton's (2001:137-142) Three Worlds Framework aimed at knowledge production within the world of science and scientific research. As a theologian, the researcher reflects on relevant theories, concepts, methodologies and the research process within the practical theological paradigm.

Chapter two discussed the history of the EBCOSA as a denomination within the context of how Christianity has developed and youth development in South Africa. It reflected on the impact colonization, apartheid and post-apartheid has had on the South African church and as such on the EBCOSA. The influence of TEAM on the EBCOSA's denominational structure, governance and theological framework was also discussed. This theological framework included key concepts relevant to the research problem of this study. A brief reflection on the state of youth in South Africa was deemed necessary when considering youth ministry in the EBCOSA. It revealed that this denomination has not taken the faith formation of its youth seriously. This was evidenced in how youth ministry along with its structures and leadership has been neglected.

One of the main reasons the researcher chose the four tasks of practical theological interpretation was because each of these tasks are dynamic and interrelated to each other. As such, there is no set order in which these tasks are obligated to function (Osmer, 2008: 10). The interpretative task has been addressed prior to conducted and analysing the empirical

study because a theoretical understanding of faith formation was necessary prior to going to interview people concerning this theme. Data on faith formation of youth ministry is limited within the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa. This chapter investigates what interdisciplinary scholars have written on faith formation (literature review). The theoretical perspectives on faith formation explored in this chapter are an attempt to analyse the appropriateness of the EBCOSA's theological framework with regards to this concept. The theories chosen were found relevant to the faith formation of youth and also as applicable to the EBCOSA (Osmer, 2008: 91). These have been found useful in developing an understanding of faith applicable to the context of this study and as relevant to formational strategies suggested later. It will discuss the different concepts discovered with the aim of narrowing down to the specific concept the researcher has chosen as relevant to the EBCOSA. The conceptualisation of faith formation and the processes and theories involved therein is discussed. Possible factors that could hinder and enhance faith formation are also discussed. The process involved in choosing these theories and concepts are discussed. How these theories and processes contribute to the faith formation of fourteen to seventeen year old youth is elaborated on. Faith development theory is not the focus of this dissertation but is an integral aspect of understanding faith formation processes among youth. This theory is mentioned as part of a discussion of how young people grow in their faith.

This chapter is aimed at reaching research objective three of this dissertation which is aimed at answering the interpretive question of practical theological interpretation; Why is this going on (within the EBCOSA)? The chapter concludes with how faith formation has been conceptualised by the researcher as applicable to ministry with fourteen to seventeen years old and also within an evangelical context. An integration of Mouton's Three Worlds Framework directs the researcher towards reflection on relevant theories, concepts, methodologies and the research process within the practical theological paradigm. This chapter proceeds by discussing faith, spiritual, discipleship, spiritual growth and maturity and faith formation as the terms most often associated with the faith formation process. Prominent traditional theological perspectives on faith formation are discussed as evidence that this process is not new to ecclesial faith traditions. The researcher proceeds to discuss the most common modes of faith formation according to the literature sourced and also as relevant to the EBCOSA. Attention is thereafter shifted towards how faith is experienced and relevant to the fourteen to seventeen year old youth, once this theoretical foundation has been laid. Three key theories relevant to a holistic understanding of this age group are discussed in this regard. The chapter concludes by discussing the roles of family, the faith community, culture and

society play as possible factors that influence the faith formation of these youth. An understanding of faith as a process toward spiritual growth is developed as applicable to the EBCOSA and the rest of this study.

### 3.2 Key terms relevant to faith formation

The term faith formation has been used differently in different contexts depending on the context and purpose for which it is used. The terms discussed in this chapter have been selected because they are the most common when reflecting on research on faith formation research and are discussed in order to alleviate any confusion to the reader, the EBCOSA and also the researcher. The terms faith and spiritual are considered working definitions because of the breadth and interdisciplinary usage of these concepts in literature. Most theological scholars have used these terms interchangeably but psychologists and sociologists use these differently. This chapter (and dissertation) does not aim at exhausting the research available on faith formation.

#### 3.2.1 Toward a working definition of 'faith'

The word faith has developed varied meanings dependant on the context in which it has been applied. In some instances these meanings have not necessarily been connected to the Christian faith. Various interdisciplinary understandings of faith are described but emphasis on the Christian faith as the backbone to this dissertation is made.

Psychological and sociological perspectives refer to faith within the context of all religious groups. Halonen and Santrock (1999: 576- 577) describes religion as the beliefs, practices, feelings and knowledge which morally and spiritually guides people's behaviour. It is through symbols and rituals that these feelings are encouraged (Giddens, 2001:531). It is through religious experiences that people are able to feel, know and understand their faith. Knowledge is thus an essential component to committing to the particular religion because of the awareness that this religion would impact one's daily life. Morality is a prominent feature of all religious groups with different moral codes outline in the teachings and rules of each group (Halonen & Santrock, 1999: 576 & Giddens, 2001: 545). Faith is thus about the feelings, knowledge and the outcomes it has on individual life. Social psychology argues that there is a difference between intrinsic religious orientation and an extrinsic religious orientation (ibid). Intrinsically motivated people live their faith while extrinsically motivated

people use their faith. Sociologist, Anthony Giddens (2001:532-533) emphasizes that this faith can be both personal and communal.

Traditional theological perspectives associate the term faith with believing in certain doctrines and creeds; or being a demonstration of particular political and cultural allegiances<sup>51</sup> specifically when church and state have been merged (Yust, 2004:2-3). Osmer (1992:16-36), Fowler, Parks<sup>52</sup> and Dykstra (in<sup>53</sup> Dykstra & Parks, 1986) agree that faith has many sides to it. It is about beliefs about God, an ongoing relationship with God, a commitment to God and an awareness of the mystery that surrounds God and limits our understanding of Him. Systematic theologian; H. R Niebhur called this the faith cube. This coincides with the EBCOSA's understanding of faith described in chapter two. It is not possible to address all the sides of this cube at the same time and youth going through a period of identity formation may experience these difference sides to faith at different times in their faith journey.

Faith is a process that is relational, involves active deeds and is open to questioning (Fowler<sup>54</sup>, 1987 & in Dykstra & Parks, 1986, Parks, 2000 & Maiko<sup>55</sup>, 2007). An important attribute of faith when working with young people is that faith is open to questioning. Youth are wrestling with their faith and are uncertain about many things. Allowing safe spaces in which they could question and receive feedback regarding their faith enables the maturity of their faith. Making connections and identifying relationships between the different parts of life is what makes them human. St. Augustine, Anselm, Karl Barth and Martin Luther are among the well-known theologians who advocated that faith cannot be separated from inquiry (questioning). True faith should not be confused with fideism (belief without questioning) because this questioning is incumbent of developing a mature faith. These youth need to constantly ask for clarification on God's understanding of the different situations they find themselves in. This allows them to discover God in the daily lives and include Him in their faith formation process. The Christian faith is based on the presupposition that one has realised one's need for redemption, which encourages that a new life in Christ replaces the old

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<sup>51</sup> This understanding of faith has been evident in South African church and political history in which government and church were linked.

<sup>52</sup> Sharon Parks is the director of Leadership for the New Commons, an initiative of the Whidbey Institute and formerly a faculty member at Harvard University

<sup>53</sup> Practical theologians; Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks edited the book Faith Development and Fowler. This book is a collection of essays in which various academic scholars including James Fowler discuss and critique his faith development theory.

<sup>54</sup> Fowler, was a professor of Theology and Human Development at Emory University, was director of both the Center for Research on Faith and Moral Development and the Center for Ethics until he retired in 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Santea Maiko is a Professor in theology at Concordia Theological Seminary and wrote the book Youth, Faith and Culture from a Kenyan Methodist perspective

one. This new life is evidenced (participating in God's redemptive work) through a relationship based on trust, loyalty, belief and commitment. Christian faith presupposes that thoughtful reflection has taken place prior to choosing this path (Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 58). This is important during the youthful stage of questioning and challenging but these youth need to be guided and empowered to do so responsibly. Psychologists, Halonen and Santrock (1999:578) align the Christian faith alongside religious conversion which they describe as to an acceptance of a religious system. They argue that people are often coerced into making a decision for faith and not given sufficient time and evidence to explore this faith.

Christian faith is at its foundation trust in and obedience to a gracious God made known in Jesus Christ (Migliore, 2004:1- 3). The Christian faith is also referred to as a process of continual transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit (Migliore, Strommen and Hardel, Parks). This process involves being justified, sanctified and experiencing vocation. Justification and glorification of the believer is part of this progression in terms of spiritual growth. Justification is God declaring the new Christian righteous in His sight because He has forgiven all his sins through His death, burial and resurrection (Barackman, 2001: 350-351 & Grudem, 2000: 725-729). Sanctification is the progressive process of God setting the believer apart unto Himself for His purpose. This setting apart involves the believer's emotions, intellect, physical body and spirit (Barackman, 2001: 361-362 & Grudem, 2000: 756-757). Simply stated, sanctification is understood as being in right relationship with God that results in a change in lifestyle (Hall & McMinn, 2003: 205). Spiritual maturity then, happens as one strives toward God's holiness. Through this transformation process faith becomes trust in and loyalty to a triune God. It has the ability to transform all of human life and not only inner aspects thereof. This process calls for continual reflection on one's lifestyle in relation to God's redemption and this reflection is based on grace alone, not merits. Faith then becomes the appropriate response of trust and acceptance of God's unconditional acceptance of us (Migliore, 2004:235-236). This response includes a personal surrender to believe in God and also about God. This implies an understanding that the Christian faith as a personal response and a wholehearted dedication to Christ and not solely to church traditions through its doctrine and rituals (Migliore, 2004:410).

The Christian faith involves a commitment of one's mind, will and affection. Strommen and Hardel<sup>56</sup> (2000: 75- 81); refer to this faith as an affair of the heart, a

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<sup>56</sup> Merton Strommen is a Christian Psychologist, and Richard Hardel is the executive director of the Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College

commitment of the mind and good actions. As an affair of the heart, faith binds us to God. This develops as one experiences feelings of security through trusting and loving relationships with the primary caregivers (parents, guardians) in one's life. It is also developed by realizing God's love through sensing His care resulting in trusting His promises and loving Him (ibid: 76). As an affair of the mind, faith includes our thoughts, will and judgements as Christians. This then means that faith should impact life emotionally, intellectually and practically. The Christian faith is about actively seeking God and His will for life and this should affect moral behaviour. It stimulates a yearning to knowing and understanding God. As Migliore (2004) stated, it goes beyond adherence to church doctrines but it also does not ignore the importance of what churches teach. Thomas Groome (1980:77), a Catholic professor of theology and religious education at Boston College in the United States of America, is a proponent of faith development theory within the context of religious education and the discipleship process. Groome describes the Christian faith as a lifelong developmental process involving the total person (ibid: 76). The church has the responsibility of faithfully teaching young people what the role and purpose of this community is. Young people in turn have the responsibility to be teachable to enhance their faith formation process.

Faith needs to be meaningful for it to be relevant to young people in the varying contexts they find themselves in (Fowler in Dysktra & Parks, 1986:15 & Parks, 2000:19). Relationally, faith as the active, patterned process help these youth understand their relations to self, others, and the world in light of their awareness of relatedness to the ultimate conditions of existence. In these contexts, youth develop relationships which require an active and loyal trust in their relationship with God as well.

In agreement with the many sides of faith discussed earlier, and with faith being an affair of the heart, mind and will, faith has both an (epistemological) knowing and a being (loving) component. This knowledge requires that informed and morally appropriate action be taken. For youth, it also means taking the perspectives of the others around you seriously and not merely considering your own. The values, meanings, worldviews of those trusted should also be considered. This knowledge gives the youth other perspectives that could inform how they make meaning of their lives. This knowledge is not considered apart from the emotions evoked during this time (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 20).

Maiko (2007:168) adds that faith is a contextual experience which includes believing, understanding, acting and relating with others. It is this relational component of faith that

allows the formation of communities of people who share common priorities and these priorities keep them connected. This is very important for youth as they are searching for spaces where they can belong and where they can connect.

Fowler has been criticised for his view of faith as a human universal phenomenon by which life is structured so that meaning is attained. This view is not restricted to the Christian faith and incorporates symbols, rituals and the beliefs of various religious traditions (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986:15). There is a difference between faith and belief. Fowler's<sup>57</sup> understanding of faith as a particular way of knowing and valuing is contrary to what theologian Karen Marie Yust' understanding that faith is only acquired as a young person matures and becomes capable of interpreting religious gestures or knowledge. When faith is restricted to being an outcome of cognitive development it limits the many faces of faith as Niebuhr taught (faith cube). Yust (ibid:4) believes it is better to understand faith as a gift from God and an act of grace in which God chooses to be in relationship with the young person rather than limiting faith to a set of beliefs based on the young person's cognitive ability. How the young person responds to God requires the commitment discussed earlier (Strommen & Hardel, Dykstra, et al). Critiquing Fowler's definition of faith, Harry Fernhout (in Dykstra & Parks, 1986:70) notes that this definition becomes too broad to hold together because in trying to align faith with human development, Fowler encompasses all aspects of this development to mean faith. Fowler does stress knowledge, loyalty, trust and relationship as cores in his definition but Fernhout believes faith as commitment is not thoroughly explained. Parks (2000: 17-18) argues that despite its initial connections, it seems best to not understand faith as belief. Historical traces of the word belief used as believe show invaluable because these words have been used apart from a personal God. Faith is not simply a set of beliefs that religious people have, it is something that all human beings do. She understands faith as enables one to change any beliefs that are not truth through the process it entails. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 77) agree that the Christian faith is believing that God exists and that He (as Christ) died for us, arose from the grave and lives today. Groome, however, argues that faith as belief is based on historical, moral and cognitive claims for making meaning accompanied with the understanding gained from the teaching of the Christian community faith is belief. Through a trusting relationship with God in which confidence in God is expressed through prayer and obedience to Him and lived and embodied through love this faith is then realised. Osmer (1992:15) adds that this relationship is based on God's

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<sup>57</sup> Fowler's definition of faith has not been accepted without criticism. This criticism is unveiled as this section progresses and also when discussing faith development theory which was founded by Fowler, later in this chapter.

faithfulness and not man's. This results in a personal commitment to Christ through knowledge of biblical truth that will assess traditional belief accordingly. This is especially important in a pluralistic world in which many religious beliefs are accepted and promoted publicly.

Having faith does not mean that one does not experience trials and suffering in one's life. Parks (2000: 24) warns against the assumption that having faith leads to a life without challenges and suffering. Faith can easily be focussed on things other than the triune God resulting in it being restricted to a suffering-free life. Jesus Christ learned obedience through suffering (Wilhoit, 2008:41). Faith becomes realised as truth and trust once tested by suffering and trials thus learning to see God in increasingly adequate ways. One's understanding of faith therefore cannot be separated from the reality of betrayal, suffering, fear and even amazement. Youth are not exempt from these trials and faith should not be communicated to them as a magic wand in which all suffering disappears. This lived and active faith is linked to an awareness of living one's life aligned with a sense of purpose and significance (Parks, 2000:26). It involves actively seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience as a human being (ibid: 7).

The mystery of faith means that the Christian does not always trust based on evidence. There are times that one cannot explain one's faith or faith experiences (Osmer, 1992: 37). In his book; *Led into Mystery*, theologian John DeGruchy (2013: 32-39) says that the mystery of faith is in the very nature of not knowing what will happen next in life. It is this mystery that invites the questioning and exploring of one's faith that is so crucial to finding an owned faith. The more one discovers the more one realises that there is still so much more to learn about God. The mystery of faith is encountered in daily life and the circumstances these youth find themselves in. It is in the raw ordinary details of life as it happens. This mystery of God is given little attention in faith formation programs to youth (Yust, 2004: xxiii). Understanding faith as a mystery also acknowledges that the teacher does not have all the answers. In this instance, the teacher of faith becomes the steward of God's truth and not that truth (Osmer, 1992: 38). It requires that one's perceptions of faith are changed and the language used to express this faith is also used differently (DeGruchy, 2013: 37).

The discussion thus far has focused on understanding and making a distinction between what Fowler advocates as faith as a universal phenomenon inherent in every human being and the Christian faith. The components of faith as advocated by Fowler have been

criticised as being too broad as it finds relevance to all faith groups. This does not mean that these components should be totally excluded in coming up with a definition of faith. The many facets of faith have been evident in the Christian faith as well. The Christian faith then has emotive, affective and active components to it which is exhibited through Christian praxis (a life of loving service within the faith community and without). These three components cannot be detached from each other as Strommen and Hardel also emphasized. As one grows in one's faith it becomes active in that it is exhibited through service. These good works are connected to a sense of calling to God and others. These works are governed by God's moral laws. An interactive faith seeks to obey these laws and God's mission. Involvement in Christian service should be based on a close relationship with God (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 79). Faith then becomes a lived reality in which life's developmental changes are incorporated. Dykstra argues that the Christian faith is appropriate and intentional participation in the redemptive work of God. This relationship requires an active response to who God is and what He has done in one's life. This is not universal and also not dependent on structured human development as it would seem from Fowler's faith development theory (discussed later). He further argues that faith as a universal phenomenon could also be faith in an idol (in Dykstra & Parks, 1986:55-57). Fowler argues that faith, be it universal or Christian, provides people with hope, courage, purpose and endurance (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 26). To him the Christian experience of conversion is not so much a shift in the way one appropriates faith but in the fundamental contents of that faith. Ultimately, it is about re-centering one's lives and adopting a new lifestyle narrative focussed on God and His redemptive acts (Dykstra in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 263).

Faith can be surmised as both a lifestyle process and a theological process. As impacting one's lifestyle, young people need to understand that faith has many sides to it. It is active and should enable questioning so that their contextual experiences (trials and suffering) through the support of the important relationships in their lives, could lead to a life of service in Christ. The Christian faith involves the theological processes of redemption, sanctification and justification. This in itself is the mystery of God which only unfolds as these youth entrust their lives to Him.

### 3.2.2 Towards a working definition of 'spiritual'

The words faith and spiritual have been used synonymously in research and conversation. This synonymous usage has not necessarily meant that these are the same

concept especially as applicable to different faith traditions and academic disciplines. This section focuses on key disparities in an effort to relate the term spiritual to the Christian faith.

Eastern religions adhere to a classical perspective on spirituality. Buddhism and Zen in which a 'Higher Power' is sought incorporate prayer and meditation as means to draw people closer to this higher being. A relativistic view of God in which there is no fixed truth is practiced here resulting in the word faith being associated with relativism<sup>58</sup> (Parks, 2000: 16). This form of spirituality is not the focus of this dissertation.

The theological interpretations of denominational faith traditions have played an important role in how people understand spirituality (Hall & McMinn, 2003:185). An understanding of the theological backgrounds of these faith traditions is important to understand the effect various practices have on people's use of and perception of spirituality. Most instances and Catholic faith traditions refer to spirituality as faith. Pentecostals view theology and spirituality as mythical and inseparable as they historically have used the terms; holiness, godliness or piety to refer to spirituality (Hall & McMinn, 2003: 185 -190). Emphasis is placed on an incarnational theology here. Wesleyan theology places emphasis on spirituality as related to orthodoxy (right belief), orthopraxy (right practice) and orthopathy (right affections) (Hall & McMinn, 2003:200-202). The Westminster Shorter Catechism describes the goal of spirituality as glorifying God. This places emphasis on God as integral to one's spiritual wellbeing. John Calvin stressed dependence on God and His word for one's spiritual wellbeing. The Christian takes his or her place within God's order and (who) expresses devotion to God in obedience to his Word (Hall & McMinn, 2003:191). Reformed and Wesleyan theology does not separate spirituality from salvation which is understood as a progressive process for Christians. This concurs with Miglore's and the EBCOSA's evangelical understanding of faith being described as a process in order to grow spiritually.

Contrary to Eastern religions, the Christian understands spirituality as essentially concerned with a personal response to and growth in the Lord and is linked to acts of Christian service as reflections of this faith commitment (Maiko, 2007:11). Being spiritual is an expression of all of one's being just as faith is and is associated with a life-long journey. Louw (2012: 179) says that it is the guiding principle to the human soul towards a life of

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<sup>58</sup> Relativism teaches that there are no absolute truths and morals applicable to all people. It is the perspective that truth and morals are dependent on the society and individual personal perceptions of right and wrong. Essentially it is a philosophy that teaches that each person is responsible for his/her own opinions of right and wrong.

quality. This life is one in which maturity, intimacy, human dignity and meaning are taken seriously. Intimacy is related to man's need for fellowship with God and other human beings which by definition implies that there is mutual interaction between God and man. It is about the awareness that God is present in all the life events of one's life. The Christian faith is a practice of spirituality (Maiko: 90 & Louw, 2012:180) and this spirituality is our relationship to God, others, and oneself. The main distinction is that Christian spirituality is grounded in Jesus Christ whilst classical spirituality is focussed on a Higher Power of some kind (Ackerman, 2001:19 & 135). Christian spirituality as with the Christian faith involves more than knowing about God and calls for a search for meaning. It is often referred to as one's spiritual life because it is about being formed by Christ. Christian spirituality differs from religion in that it is personal whereas the latter is organizational. Ackerman (2001:20) describes the difference as; religion being focussed on learning about God whereas spirituality focuses on learning of God. Christian spirituality also differs from spiritualism which focuses on separation from the world to focus on the spirit (ibid: 22). This alludes to what is known as dualism; a separation of the spiritual from the material. Christian spirituality is practiced within community and not merely in isolation as some religions encourage. A spirituality that is bounded by historic Christian theology defies pluralism and asserts truth claims about God, human development and the ways people search for God and spiritual growth. (Hall & McMinn, 2003: x). Christian spirituality needs to be distinguished apart from other forms of spirituality. Spirituality is our human response to our yearning for meaning, identity, connection and surrender. This spirituality must be holistic otherwise it is limited to a dualistic perception of self which detaches who we are spiritually from the rest of our lives. Christian spirituality is dependent on the Holy Spirit for wholeness (Benner, 1998: 95-108). Benner describes Christian Spirituality is evidenced through a response to the call from God to be committed to Jesus and a transformational approach to life. It is a process nurtured through grace through which Christian service flows. It is not an isolated spirituality but relies on a faith community for its maturity.

The discussion thus far has led to the conclusion that there are three ways of expressing spirituality (Maiko, 2007:28), namely; an incarnational spirituality; a mythical spirituality and a classical spirituality. Incarnational spirituality reflects one's relationships with God and one's neighbour (humanity) and is connected to the need to be intimate. It is this intimacy that makes it possible for a relationship with God. A mystical spirituality enables one to have an internal experience with God (mystery). This connects to the understanding of faith as a mystery discussed earlier. Not everything about one's faith can be

explained (Louw, 2012:181). Classical spirituality can be associated with the dualism from neo-platonic philosophy in which one can progress from the physical to the more spiritual because the physical is considered evil. Here a higher power is sought through spiritual disciplines but this does not necessitate a personal relationship with the God of the Bible. Christian spirituality (as used in this dissertation) can be understood as synonymous with the Christian faith in which faith enables a sense of spirituality which is expected to mature. To summarise, faith could be understood as the verb in which doing, thinking, feeling, reasoning and growing are possible in relationship with God. Spiritual could be understood as the adjective thereof in which a person is spiritual because they have faith. These could be distinguished according to the relationships one has with God and others.

### 3.2.3 Discipleship

The terms discipleship and spiritual growth has been used synonymously with faith formation in Christian education and theological research (Wilhout, Powell, et al; Groome; Dykstra). This section in no way aims at exhausting this term but attempts at a brief theological understanding thereof in the context of youth ministry and faith formation.

In his book, *A New kind of youth ministry*, Chris Flomsbee (2007:39) introduces the concept of reculturing. By reculturing youth discipleship, Flomsbee calls for a shifting from a structured learning about God to a lifestyle of living for God. Discipleship is not solely about learning more about God. It's about learning how to live one's life to glorify God. This is specifically important when discussing how theology can both form and maintain a sense of Christian identity in youth. Groome (1980:73-77) places discipleship under the aspect of Christian education. Through discipleship classes youth are taught how to live, how to pray and the importance of fellowship and are encouraged to read Scripture. When discipleship as a form of formation becomes an aim to theoretically educate young people with all the theory they can absorb, it leaves no wonder as to why many young people fall out of faith when they are freed from the ecclesial structures they have been raised in (Powell, et al). Discipleship should promote the Christian faith as the good news of Jesus Christ and not the fear, anxiety and self-hatred provoked by evangelistic propagations of the gospel. This good news teaches about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for which they are called to a relationship with God. The core of this process is to teach young people that God is sovereign and active in the world they live in and encounter daily. These youth need to learn how to

own their faith through loving God, personal conversion, striving toward a Christian lifestyle and getting involved in their faith communities and world<sup>59</sup> (Groome, 1980: 49-51). Discipleship should thus help these youth live out the character of Christ rather than get as much knowledge about Christ that they can. Discipleship should also not be restrictive in claiming that all knowledge about God can be taught because faith is also dependent on God's self-revelation. Through His presence in the youth's life, they are empowered and enabled to participate in this redemptive relationship. In contrast to Fowler, faith here is not solely focussed on making meaning but on responding appropriately to God (in Dystra & Parks, 1986:56-57). In an article entitled Future Christians and Church education, Fowler (1979:105) equates religious education with what he terms creative discipleship. Here he alludes to the necessity that the discipleship process becomes creative because it takes the human development of youth seriously. In other word, he notes that discipleship processes should be aligned to the cognitive, emotive and spiritual readiness of the youth. Dykstra (in Dystra & Parks, 1986: 63) disagrees with Fowler saying that it not the readiness of people that give them faith, it is their obedience responds to God which does. Fowler's theory helps understand this readiness but does not equate to the response. Dykstra's earlier definition of faith also challenges Fowler's use of knowledge as a component of faith. Faith does require knowledge but this knowledge is particularly about who God is and what He is doing in one's life and also this world. Discipleship is the process of equipping young people with this kind of knowledge so that they could respond appropriately. Through this process meaning to one's life and purpose in Christ is found. Youth workers should empower these youth with a faith they can take with them for the rest of their life journey and not one that is only suitable for a certain time and context. It should be a faith that is relevant and adaptable to the varying challenges and contexts they may find themselves in. A faith that is not growing and practical makes these youth question its relevance for their lives. This type of discipleship helps young people understand the story of God and what their own role in God's story is (Folmsbee, 2007: 41-42). These youth will learn how to deal with challenges and make sound choices through viewing their faith as an integral part of their lives.

Barackman (2001:396-397) mentions three types of disciples, namely: nominal, real and false. Nominal disciples are saved by faith but are not willing to pay the price Christ requires through sacrifice. Real disciples realize that they cannot live without Christ. False disciples act like true disciples but never really made the commitment required. In Catholic tradition, a disciple is equated with an apprentice as it is seen as a process of submitting

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<sup>59</sup> Groome emphasizes the importance of getting involved in socio-political and economic issues around us.

oneself to someone more experienced to gain the skills required. In this instance a young person needs the skills and experience of a mature Christian to guide them along their spiritual journey (Yust, et al, 2006:255 & Chiroma, 2012:3). This is aligned to the idea of mentorship. Spiritual growth happens through personal relationship and Christian education as a tool empowers these relationships. Older adults can serve as mentors in conveying Christian values to young people (Maiko, 2007:166). Fowler terms this relationship, sponsorship. A sponsor<sup>60</sup> walks alongside the young person in an effort to integrate religious truths with the lifestyle challenges they face (Dykstra in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 267). In this way, the young person is guided, advised and supported by a role model and spiritual example based on their knowledge, life and experience. This relationship becomes a power-free partnership who desire mutual growth. This implies that the young person also has something to teach the adult. The centrality of this process being based on an authentic and genuine relationship cannot be overestimated. The adult as older person needs to be able to live what they teach for the discipleship process to be fruitful (Egelar, 2003:11).

Discipleship then is the ministry that teaches young people the fundamental truths of the Christian faith and also trains these youth about the practices relevant to develop as a Christian. This teaching is patterned after the lifestyle of its teacher who should be a Christian themselves (Wilhoit, 2008:181 & 188). The heart of this form of discipleship is a disciple whose thoughts and actions are patterned after Christ. Discipleship is built into the DNA of the Christian faith because the goal of every believer should be to pass on the Christian faith and lifestyle to the next generation (Egelar, 2003:12). Discipleship develops into helping young people discover and strengthen their trust and faith in Jesus Christ. It is about helping them learn to trust God by creating spaces in which they can explore their relationship with Him (Powell, et al, 2013:34-35). True disciples are willing to follow their teacher's example, apply it to their lives and pass it onto others (Barackman, 2001:394). This process could last several years because it is a life-long process and not a mere programme to be followed (ibid). The mistake usually made by many Christians is that of detaching one's spiritual walk from everyday life. Young people are usually encouraged to forsake all worldly things in an effort to become better Christians without understanding why. An understanding of what it means to live by hope is demonstrated to these youth through joy and thanksgiving. It is this hope that inspires them to want to grow further. The church's capacity to exemplify thanksgiving, praise, and joy go hand in hand with its readiness for costly discipleship (Migliore, 2004: 245). Young people need to be taught about the cost it takes to being a disciple. This cost

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<sup>60</sup> The term sponsor here could be understood as what **scholars** have termed mentors.

involves forsaking all they have and are for Christ, learning to deny selfish desires and daily deciding to follow Christ (Barackman, 2001: 395). A big part of exemplifying hope is helping them see that it is not easy (mentorship) through allowing them into even the toughest spaces the mentor goes through. True discipleship then is evidenced by Christians who abide in God's Word, bear the spiritual fruit in the lives and exercise love toward others. Without the commitment and motivation of discipleship, young people will not sacrifice their comforts and conveniences to serve God (Barackman, 2001: 398).

#### 3.2.4 Spiritual Growth/ Spiritual maturity

The words spiritual growth and maturity and discipleship have been referred to synonymously in research and also Christian language (Maiko, 2007:29-30 & Barackman, 2001). In most instances spiritual growth and maturity are referred to mean the same phenomenon (hence the hash-tag between them). Briefly, spiritual growth could be described as the process towards spiritual maturity.

Spiritual growth takes place when young people experience God in the different relationships and contexts they find themselves in. It is the continuous movement and process of growth (Louw, 2012:181). Sanctification, which is integral to the growth (formation) process not an undisturbed process of development or a neatly ordered sequence of stages nor is it quantifiable or predictable (Migliore, 2004:239- 240). Spiritual growth, just like discipleship should change one's life. John Ackerman (2001:30-39) promotes five stages of spiritual growth that are dependent on emotional and character development which are quite similar to those introduced by James Marcia's identity development theory (discussed later) in the 1960's. Ackerman (2001:29) notes that most systems seem to say that if the young person tries harder, we'll be closer to God. In contrast to Migliore, Ackerman believes that spiritual growth does not always happen naturally. Ackerman's stage theory is based on the metaphor of the disciples and the relationship they had with Christ. Stage one (as in identity diffusion) is seen as the dependent stage. During this stage youth are dependent on parents and God for everything (physically and spiritually). It is through parents that these youth here learn how to serve God. Their parents; whether Christian or non-Christian are most influential at this stage. Stage two (as in foreclosure) is seen as one of counter-dependence. This is the time when peers and other external voices create tensions between youth and their parents. There is a struggle to gain independence from parents because a new identity in the new group is necessary. This is evident through the disciples leaving all else to follow Jesus. Mutual

competence as the third stage (as in identity moratorium) is the time when more responsibility is expected. There is a sense of growing up yet also remaining dependant. Independence as stage four, teaches one to take responsibility for one's own life and actions. The influential voices are no longer as active as before. This stage may be one of anxiety and despair for the young person but the challenge is to realise God's presence amidst this. This stage reflects the stage in which the disciples felt despair after Christ's crucifixion because they felt neglected. Finally interdependence (as in identity achievement) is reached once all the previous stages have been experienced enabling one to have matured and feel more confident being part of the community of faith. Ackerman notes that one can interchange between the above-mentioned stages.

Dykstra adds that encouraging young Christians to strive toward perfection is wrong because there is in fact no end point to spiritual growth. There is no point at which anyone can claim spiritual maturity (in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 60). Being intentional about one's faith is an imperative of faith. Spiritual growth then happens through discerning how one has holistically grown as a Christian through the total orientation of the self towards God. Christian psychologist; Larry Crabb (2002:3 ) agrees with Dykstra by challenging the notion that spiritual growth can be measured in his book; *The Pressure's Off*. From a covenant theology perspective, Crabb notes that many Christians give up the Christian life because they are constantly struggling to live up to the traditional practices that churches have put in place as important to growing in one's faith. He speaks of the Old and New ways of life as being focussed on practices and traditions to now focussing on relationship with God as priority. Crabb contests that people have over-emphasized spiritual disciplines at the expense of this relationship with Christ. Whatever mode chosen becomes your master. You've served many masters in your lifetime, but your goal has remained constant. That goal is your idol. (Crabb, 2002: 5). The old way abides by principles of sequence which results in blessings. Follow and do the right things and God will bless. If this is not done, God will not bless. As a psychologist, Crabb argues that many faith traditions have zoomed into the view that human beings love control. This Principle of sequence allows one control to decide what spiritual practices one thinks necessary to grow as a Christian and also how busy one will become in the local church. Sadly, this busyness becomes the measurement of spiritual growth leaving many disillusioned about the faith. Those who hold to the illusion of control lose the enjoyment of freedom. There is the line between the practice of spirituality and the experience of spirituality (ibid: 7 & 19). In this effort to do right things people move farther away from God. Wilhoit (2008::61) however, agrees that the Christian should take personal

responsibility for who they have become through conforming to God's will. The Christian commits to being formed by Christ. So yes, one cannot measure spiritual growth but looking at lifestyle patterns of intentionality toward a life committed to Christ could be a possibility. Dykstra (ibid: 61-62) adds that this intentionality of the young person's lifestyle needs to be discerned by reflection on their entire life events and experiences and how they have grown through these. This is when the developmental theories and also the influential factors that affect the faith formation of these youth become important (later). These theories and factors assist in following the intentional spiritual journey of these youth and not merely what they are capable of at a particular age.

As young people grow in their faith, they become more aware of the reality of God's grace in one's life. This is important to a young person who is constantly being bombarded by conflicting expectations in a fast changing society. This realization that God's grace surpasses all these pressures should become a way of life for a maturing youth (Dean, et al: 2001, 246-253). An understanding of Christian vocation enables one to position oneself according to God's purpose for your life. As the youth matures in the faith they realize that whatever their position in life as a Christian they are called to be a partner in God's mission in the world (Migliore, 2004: 246). As one grows as a Christian, one's initial approach to the Bible as a magical answer book changes to seeing the Bible as the source through which our lives and Christian character is transformed and strengthened. Migliore terms this as a mature hearing of Scripture (ibid: 241). This also includes opening oneself to the influence Scripture can have on one's life and also committing to doing so in the context of the faith community. As one grows in one's faith, one's prayers change. This is marked by understanding the difference between what youth want and what they need (ibid: 242). This is especially important for a new Christian who is usually afraid to pray as they have their own views on what prayer looks like. A maturing prayer does not focus on techniques associated with prayer but the earnestness thereof. Another component of spiritual growth would be using one's freedom in Christ responsibly. This then enables service within various spheres of God's redemptive plan for the world. As one grows in one's faith youth become increasingly conscious of and sensitive to the needs of others (ibid: 244). These 'others' are the faith community with whom we partake in sacraments as a sign of our solidarity and also those who are not part of the Body of Christ but are in need of Him. This calls for a self-sacrificial attitude as a Christian. As one grows in the faith, one's attitude towards life and its circumstances change. As noted earlier, a linear view of life does not teach people that suffering can also be part of growth. It

advocates blessing from a loving God at the expense of an understanding of a gracious, merciful and just God. One's understanding of grace is then challenged.

The spiritual journey is not about living as we should so life work's as we want. It's not a linear path. It's not about growing up into the maturity of a good self-image and developing the energy to do good things; it is about growing down into the brokenness of self-despair and deepening our awareness of how poorly we love compared to Trinitarian standards. The spiritual journey is rooted in liberty, the freedom of grace (and) doing what's right because you're privileged to do so.

(Crabb, 2002: 26)

Spiritual growth impacts the knowledge component of one's faith as well. What the Christian knows and appropriates and the way he or she responds is not based solely on knowledge. In other words, one's ability to grow in the faith is not solely dependent on one's cognitive development. The Holy Spirit works differently in people's lives. If the Christian faith is not based on human development then spiritual growth is not only progressive but regressive as well (Dykstra in Dystra & Parks, 1986:59-61). Youth need to be taught that they will make mistakes even when they have become Christians. The notion that they should strive to perfection contrasts the value of grace. Grace is usually taught as a gift of God's kindness towards mankind. This description is limited to justification and should include sanctification (His regenerating and strengthening power). Grace is about how we live and not only how we are converted. Grace then, becomes the pathway for changes in which the young person's character, integrity, joy and relationship with God are changed (Wilhoit, 2008:79). It is through these mistakes that they learn to confess their sins and trust God to help them forward, resulting in them growing spiritually.

Mark Yaconelli (in Dean, et al, 2001: 157- 163) prioritizes prayer, confession, being part of a worship community and a solidarity to the poor as important Christian practices for young people to partner in God's mission. These four areas enable young people to love God, themselves, believers and also their unbelieving neighbour.

Spiritual maturity is realized when young people are able to measure to the full stature of Christ (Maiko, 2007:29). The various modes discussed later are ways through which this maturity can be expressed. Examples of lived faith through modelling, getting involved in service to God, believing doctrine and Bible reading are all ways to enhance this process. One who has matured in the faith exhibits Christian assurance through reflecting a sense of well-being, security and peace (Maiko, 2007:29). It has been evidenced that Christian education is an important mode of faith formation for enhancing spiritual growth. The aim of this

education, according to Dykstra (in Dystra & Parks, 1986:253) is to help youth live fully into the maturity imaged in a particular faith tradition, theology and philosophy. The notion of maturity implies that there is some level of growth or development that needs to take place towards it. Education thus assists in this maturation process. Dykstra defines maturity as something that one moves toward and grows into (ibid: 254). Fowler's faith development theory can assist in this process because it helps know how to prepare for the appropriate Christian education as a formative process toward spiritual maturity. It can assist in understanding human competencies that are required to apply the Christian education to one's life. This is based on the presupposition that Christian leaders would view spiritual maturity primarily through their particular theological lenses. An understanding of the Christian faith and also spiritual maturity is important here. Faith development theory then also helps the church measure whether their faith formation processes are adequate and reaching the aims they have for the youth they minister to (ibid: 258). This is the reason why the empirical study focusses on this particular theory within the EBCOSA.

The suffering of mature faith is located in learning how to hold on to, and when to let go of, the perceptions, patterns, and relationships that one experiences as partaking in ultimate value and truth (Parks, 2000:33). Determining when one has attained this adult-like faith is not dependent on age but on spiritual maturity which in itself is difficult to measure even though there may be evidence of a transformed lifestyle. Spiritual growth, like discipleship is a lifelong journey through seasons that God uses to bring us into deepening intimacy with God and transformation into the likeness of Jesus (Demarest, 2009). In his book, *Fraying the Psalms*, Walter Brueggemann (1982) finds in the Psalms phases of spiritual growth that he names Orientation, Painful Disorientation, and Reorientation. Orientation is the season in which we come to faith in Christ, begin our spiritual journey, and start to experience God's blessings. Painful Disorientation involves the experiences of doubt, struggles, hardships, and dark nights. Reorientation represents a time of renewal and a deepening relationship with God that builds upon transformation that happens through the previous difficult season. These experiences are consistent with those of biblical and historical characters, and thus to be expected as part of our relationship with God.

Elizabeth Caldwell says that how time is perceived and consumed also influences our spiritual growth (in Yust et al, 2006:328). Chronos time (speed, change and overscheduled lives) does not value time with God as one is constantly living by the clock. Kairos time values the essence of who God is enabling greater focus on who He is. This distinction in time

dictated a lot of how the spiritual practices are understood. It influences our perceptions of prayer, solitude, listening to God, and so forth. Focus is placed on the quality of life rather than how much is done with life. Spirituality in this sense does not become another thing to live towards. It is life with Christ in its fullness.

In summary; spiritual growth has been associated with the ability to measure to the full stature of Christ. Youth should experience God in the different relationships and contexts they find themselves in order for this process of growth to be fruitful. Sanctification (as discussed earlier in this chapter) is an integral part of the process. Spiritually mature youth's approach to Bible and prayer changes; they realize that suffering is an inevitable reality of the Christian life. These youth use their freedom in Christ responsibly through the sound choices they make and through expressing a greater appreciation for values like grace, thankfulness, provision, and so forth. Faith that lasts (sticky faith) is both internal and external; reflecting the young person's thoughts, emotions, choices and actions; it is personal and communal and also both mature yet in the process of maturing. Young people maturing in their faith have placed this faith as a priority in their lives (Powell, et al, 2011:21).

### 3.2.5 Faith Formation

This chapter has discussed the terms faith and spiritual as separate but as one in meaning in the Christian context. The virgule has been used in the heading above to confirm this unity and also to indicate concurrence with scholars who have used the terms implying the same teaching. The following section now shifts to discovering an understanding of faith (spiritual)<sup>61</sup> formation thereafter reflecting on its relevance to fourteen to seventeen years old youth. In so doing, it reflects on three key developmental theories in efforts to understand the developmental phase of this age group. It further reflects on three influential voices in the life of this age group because they are in a phase in which the voice and influence of the other still plays a great role.

The concept formation implies shaping, constructing, creating or developing one's faith. Faith formation has been used on three broad levels, namely; training, shaping and being shaped. Spiritual formation is understood as training (or teaching) about spiritual activities that enhance and form part of faith communities (Hall & McMinn, 2003: 4-5). Practical theologian, Richard Osmer wrote three books on teaching for faith formation

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<sup>61</sup> From here on, this concept is referred to as faith formation.

namely; *A Teachable Spirit: Recovering the teaching office in the church* (1990); *Teaching for faith: A guide for teachers of adult classes* (1992) and *The Teaching Ministry of Congregations* (2005). The first calls on Christian leaders to think theologically about the meaning of faith in ways that would inform how and what they teach. The second, exhorts these leaders to view teaching (a mode of faith formation) as a means of grace and not a causative factor for faith. This book exhorts the church to create spaces in which faith can be revived through teaching. Teaching in faith formation is aimed at helping youth personalize their faith through owning it (Osmer, 1992: 11-13). Osmer's definition of faith has been discussed. The challenge that the post-modern church faces is that it is still teaching the same way in which it was taught, through lectures (ibid:17). The beliefs a Christian has influences the way they relate to God. For this reason, religious teaching must equip youth with the biblical information needed to form their beliefs. This could be through use of biblical texts and stories as well as church history texts (ibid: 25-26). Young people will challenge the traditional stories and historical texts but it is important for them to understand these in order to make informed choices about their faith. The beginning of this chapter described the many components of faith that need to be considered. Teaching for faith formation to enhance one's relationship with God, has to go beyond transmission of knowledge to the practise of this knowledge (ibid: 27). The testimonies of other Christians are important for youth faith formation and as such need to have relationships with these Christians because a relationship with God cannot be detached from a relationship with His church (ibid: 28). Chapter two noted that South Africa is classified as a Christian country. Osmer (ibid:31) argues that the surveys conducted to make such classifications does not take faith as commitment seriously because these surveys only refer to religious adherence and not to a committed personal relationship with Christ. Such a relationship requires an investment of one's heart, time, resources, skills, etc. Such commitment is not even dependant on the self but on God's redemptive work in our place (Osmer, ibid: 33). Our commitment is our response to this work. This is especially important in situations where youth have been pressurised to make decisions about their faith prematurely.

Theological disciplines such as the modes of spiritual formation described are placed as priority because formation in this instance becomes the process that makes people successful in ministry. A second level or perspective of faith formation is that of shaping the spiritual self which is one's heart and will as this affects emotion and intellect. This is usually coupled with the dualistic understanding that one's mind and emotions can be detached from one's physical being. It agrees with a holistic definition of faith as mind, will, emotion and

action. Faith formation of youth needs to get through to the heart and will of these youth as these ensure an authentic faith. Young people have been shaped by the church through its narratives, rituals and traditions. These need to be adapted and explained to the levels of these youth for growth and sustainable impact on their lives. The third perspective of faith formation is understood as being shaped by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. Familial, cultural, peer and ecclesial influences could also be those shaping the young person's faith. None of these three levels or perspectives can be used in isolation (Strommen & Hardel, 2000). The teachings and processes of sanctification, redemption, justification and reconciliation bear specific reference witness here as does the mystery involved in faith. This perspective requires that a clear understanding of what the Christian faith means and what it entails through discipleship and spiritual growth is passed on to these youth.

#### 3.2.5.1 Traditional theological perspectives on faith formation

Perspectives from the Catholic, evangelical Protestant and African cultural faith traditions for various reasons are highlighted at this point. The concept of faith formation is closely associated with the Catholic tradition and has been organized as part of its theological practices for centuries. The Evangelical Protestant tradition, although varied in approaches is suited to the theological understandings of the researcher and also to the denomination used as a focussed case for this study. African cultural faith perspectives are crucial to this research study being birthed out of a South African context which is faced with African people's perceptions of faith. These three perspectives are rooted in centuries of church history and research. This brief introduction in no way aims at exhausting these perspectives. The intention is to discuss these within the broader framework of youth faith formation. It should also be noted that there are varying anthropological perceptions about youth within the Christian faith tradition. These perceptions will not be elaborated on here but should be noted as important considerations when understanding the role of faith formation within these contexts.

Faith formation in the Catholic tradition is aimed leading youth into an authentic relationship with God. This formation process begins at the age of seven. Catholicism viewed youth as little adults and focus was placed on what they were to become as Christians not who they presently are. This perception changed in 1910 when young people were seen as models of sanctity called to be holy and capable of relationship with God. Spirituality is understood as the human capacity to move beyond the self in and through relationship with others and God (Yust, et al, 2006:81 & 83). This is an effort towards personal growth to become more

authentic in one's relationship with God. Sanctity is expressed through this authentic relationship with a Triune God in which all personal control is relinquished. It is important to note here that Catholicism does not separate the spiritual and religious. The seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church (baptism, Eucharist, confirmation, reconciliation, matrimony, holy orders and anointing of the sick) are understood as gifts that elevate one to a higher level of grace which brings one closer to God (ibid :84). Rituals, stories and liturgy are all means by which the faith of these youth is shaped. Young people in this faith tradition can participate in communion from as early as seven years old. This participation is dependent on the priest and the child's parents. Philosopher; Tertullian objected to infant baptism because he felt that children did not fully understand this sacrament enough to take responsibility for it (Yust, et al, 2006:85). Pope Innocent III argued that these youth are forgiven through this sacrament and also given virtues and grace at this time. Catholicism has structured spiritual formation programs covering doctrine, prayer and retreats aimed at youth. Young children and youth have also been canonized as saints within this faith community. These saints are reflections on youth who offered their service to the work of the church in society. Giving oneself to others is a core of Catholic spirituality (ibid: 89-90). One can only truly reach transcendence with God through the help of the other. Many confirmation candidates select these young saints as their role models. Vatican II (1965) declared youth too as disciples because God can minister through these. It was at this council that liturgical language was translated from Latin to accommodate young people in their understanding of Mass procedures in order to fully participate in the Eucharist (ibid :90). This called for a renewal of how the church viewed and cared for youth. Catholic schools are also an effort to take faith formation of children and youth seriously. These schools teach solidarity with the poor as a core of spirituality. Catholics speak of living the perfect Christian life in the same way other faith groups refer to faith formation only, Mary is the one pointing its members into a relationship with Christ (ibid: 91). Catechesis is obligatory until the age of ten. It is believed that the events in the Catholic calendar (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Feast of village patron) also contribute to the faith formation of youth with feasts like All Soul's Day are aimed at instilling devotion towards the saints with Jesus as their best friend (ibid: 92). Unfortunately, there are many who do not internalize all the above-mentioned beliefs and practices not realizing the relevance for their lives and spiritual growth. Perhaps too much emphasis on church doctrine has added to this attitude (ibid: 82-83). The priority of our lived way over our verbal way, is not always front and centre in youth ministry (ibid: 254). Faith formation in the Catholic faith tradition can be surmised as being the responsibility of the faith community, the parents and also the youth themselves. Youth should exhibit devotion to

the faith community and the other. Education through schools and calendar events are all modes through which the faith of youth is shaped.

Faith formation in the Evangelical Protestant tradition is aimed at helping youth testify about their personal faith. Evangelical Protestant Christians are paying much more attention to the concept of faith formation as this comes with the harsh reality that many of its members cannot testify to where they are in their personal spiritual growth (Willard in Hall & McMinn, 2003: 3). As sinful beings, young people are also in need of salvation but many times do not have the language to express a response to this call. Christian practices and rituals enable them to have a language through which they express their relationship to Christ (Yust, et al, 2006:81). An understanding of grace is crucial to an understanding of how God works with youth. Evangelicals focus much on the conversion experience of a young person when addressing faith formation (Yust, et al, 2006:81). This has been evidenced in the EBCOSA's theological framework on faith. It is only after personal conversion (salvation) has taken place through God's gracious work through the Holy Spirit that spiritual growth can take place. This process takes time. As noted earlier in this chapter, justification and sanctification are crucial to an evangelical understanding of spiritual growth. Created in God's image, youth are both spiritual and relational beings. As noted in chapter two; missionary schools and organizations were established to focus on the spiritual formation of youth. Sunday schools and youth groups are key focus areas for this formation (ibid: 95).

Protestants place great emphasis on biblical truth and see youth as gifts from God because Christ acknowledged them as such. The gospel passages reflect a young person's faith as real, not just a weak forerunner of adult spirituality but an example for adults. The spiritual life of youth is to be respected, protected, and nurtured (Stonehouse in<sup>62</sup> Yust, et al, 2006:97). Spirituality is acknowledged as a life lived in relationship with God. This involves the whole person and being in relationship with others and serving others as important. This relationship with God is initiated by God and not human beings (ibid: 99). Youth understand God through the person of Jesus Christ. Stories about and faith traditions explaining the life of Jesus as an example for them to follow is important for their spiritual growth. Faith becomes the set of beliefs and values the young person puts together from his or her interpretation of what has been taught, their life experiences, and their encounters with God (Stonehouse in Yust, et al, 2006:100).

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<sup>62</sup> Yust, Johnson, Sasso & Roehlkepartain edited the book; *Nurturing child and adolescent spirituality: Perspectives from the world's religious traditions* in 2006. This book is a collection of essays written by various scholars.

Faith in the Protestant tradition is nurtured through worship which incorporate stories, catechesis and confirmation. Confirmation is understood as the time young people are equipped with biblical knowledge of who God is and also certain church traditions. They are taught to read the Bible and prayer but these do not guarantee any relationship with God or spiritual growth as is the case of Catholicism. Faith development theory could also be helpful in assisting the church to appropriate what it teaches in confirmation and discipleship classes according to the age specific challenges these youth face. The family and faith community are integral role players in the faith formation of its youth in this tradition. This is aligned with the understanding that faith is relational (Strommen and Hardel, 2000). Infant baptism is regarded as the beginning of spiritual life for the church where after parents take responsibility. Through this practice, inherited guilt for sin is addressed (Yust, et al, 2006:113). The EBCOSA, however, agree with Tertullian saying that a young person should be baptized when they fully understand what it means. This baptism then becomes a public testimony of their faith. Here, the belief in dedicating children (at any age) is viewed as act of parents giving their children back to God independent of any conversion or baptism experience of the young person.

Protestant evangelicals disagree about how conversion happens. Some (fundamentalistic dispensationals) believe in a sudden memorable event in which sins were verbally confessed before God and others (liberal evangelicals) see it as a gradual process signified by many events over time (Yust et al, 2006:116). It should be noted that both these understandings create challenges to the faith formation of young people. Sudden conversion can easily be associated with pressure to get converted at the expense of not understanding what one is committing to. Young people end up pleasing adults through this process, sometimes forfeiting the full process of discipleship because conversion has been viewed as the goal, rather than a life of faith. Similarly gradual or unconscious conversion experiences benefit the young people as they have space to search and question their faith but can still get caught up in attending and adhering to church practices like confirmation and discipleship classes and prayer meetings and even youth group to please adults. Catherine Stonehouse (in Yust, et al, 2006:119), a theologian specialising in children and youth faith formation; proposes that young people be encouraged to have a faith relationship with God without using anxiety provoking appeals or public invitations. She adds that spiritual nurture should be an ongoing focus of the church in which multiple opportunities for spiritual growth is given. Sunday schools and youth group are viewed as two ministerial drivers in this tradition.

Attention is now shifted to how traditional African cultures perceive the faith formation of its youth. It should be noted that this section is deemed important in a South African youth ministry context but is not necessarily relevant for all the youth interviewed during the empirical process.<sup>63</sup> Faith formation in the broader<sup>64</sup> African cultural tradition stresses importance to the role of family and the ancestors during this formation process. Faith formation is not separated from human development in this tradition resulting in faith practices being aligned to developmental traditional customs. These customs refer to age appropriate customs as rites of passage within African cultures.

African Christian communities place emphasis on the continuity of life through its ancestors (Otieno in Yust, et al, 2006:82). Communities can only continue when the youth are invested in because these are a gift from the ancestors (spiritual world). Oral narrative rituals and practices are aimed at communal solidarity and this is intentionally taught to the younger generation. It is difficult to separate an understanding of faith formation from an understanding of ancestral priority in these communities in which God's omnipresence is focal. Children are named after the ancestor dependant on the situation out of which they were born. Names have great meaning and are considered a spiritual affirmation of the goodness of creation (ibid: 125). Ethics and moral health are also considered essential to understanding spiritual growth. Initiation is seen as a spiritual occasion in a young person's life as it symbolises rebirth. Circumcision rites are emphasized in adolescent years when the young person is usually between twelve and thirteen years old. During this time practical knowledge about culture and also life skills (cooking, hunting, etc.) are passed on to these youth. It is important to get the blessing of the ancestors while these youth are young. African cultural tradition also stresses the importance of orthodoxy and orthopraxy when referring to the faith formation of its youth (Maiko, 2006:11-12). Oral narratives like storytelling are prioritized in passing on the faith because investing in youth is imperative as they are gifts from ancestors.

Faith formation then, is the transformative process of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and putting off the desires of the self in accordance with Scripture<sup>65</sup> (Willard in Wilhoit, 2008:9). Wilhoit (2008: 14) says that all people can be negatively or positively

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<sup>63</sup> Chapter two described the EBCOSA as a predominantly coloured community. At least three black youth were interviewed in the empirical study. This dissertation is also not limited to the EBCOSA but anticipates relevance in a broader evangelical South African context (elaborated on in chapter six).

<sup>64</sup> African traditional cultures are quite vast even in South Africa. This discussion only reflects on African in its broadest sense and not on any specific tradition.

<sup>65</sup> Romans 13:14

formed spiritually. This formation impacts the person's character, wisdom and faith greater than developmental theories would. It is an intentional and communal process of Christians growing in relationship with God. It requires that one get involved in this relationship with God and the faith community. Maturity is aimed at becoming Christ-like through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. (Wilhoit, 2008:23). As such, faith formation is a life-long process requiring multiple ministry approaches and not just one specific program. Wilhoit (ibid: 26-27) places emphasis on Christians being the ones who grow because he believes that many become Christian as a once-off occurrence. He adds that many Christians fail in keeping the gospel central to ministry rather viewing it as an entry point into ministry. The gospel is not only meant for proclamation but for growing in the faith as well. This gospel is what motivates the Christian to pursue a life of daily growth in Christ.<sup>66</sup> The task of faith formation is to preach and teach young people this gospel so that they are able to understand it better and gain greater confidence in it and it has to confront false gods and idols present in these young people's lives. This confrontation enables youth to see the behaviours and attitudes that do not align with the gospel in order to change these. This process takes time and willingness to allow the gospel to daily intercept their lives (Wilhoit, 2008:31-32). When too much emphasis is placed on the gospel as a single decision for Christ, the youth and church do not see any need for any further faith formation to take place. Faith formation must address the external and internal challenges youth face and this can only be done through formation that is entrenched in the gospel (Setran & Kiesling, 2013: 26- 27).

### 3.2.5.2 Common modes of faith formation

The researcher refers to modes<sup>67</sup> of faith or spiritual formation as the different ways people (parents and faith communities) have encouraged faith formation in their different contexts. Consistent adherence to these modes has often been equated to one's level of spiritual growth. These modes have been referred to as rituals and Christian activities or practices (Yust et al, Stonehouse, Powell, Wilhout, etc.) which enable young people to express their faith. When faith is understood as relational; these modes helps these youth connect on varying levels with the relationships in their lives; Christ, family, church, friends, teachers, and others. Language, rituals, and teachings of faith communities are important even in faith development (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 39). It has been alluded that these

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<sup>66</sup> Wilhout (2008:31) describes salvation as the complete process of turning to Christ (through redemption) through being sanctified and glorified in Him. Using Acts 1:16 as motivation, he adds that spiritual formation involves guarding this gospel from idols and false gods in our culture.

<sup>67</sup> The term modes are not unique to this study and can be associated with the modes of moral education that Johannes van Der Ven (1998:21) has researched. These are mentioned in chapter five of this study.

modes are disciplines aimed at Christlikeness<sup>68</sup>. They are concrete and specific ways in which one expresses devotion to Christ (Wilhoit, 2008: 39-40) and are unusual to the discipleship, spiritual growth and faith formation process. These modes are essential for the formation of persons committed to growing in the life of the Christian faith (Caldwell in Yust, et al, 2006:326). Attentive listening, Bible reading, service, prayer, sacraments, confirmation (or catechism) and fellowship, youth group, worship have been the most prominent in the research conducted. Important modes connected to moral formation have been found to be reflection, mediation, use of time, celebrating ones faith, discussion, citizenship, fasting, discipline, modelling and value transmission. Many of the latter modes may not have been most prominent but have specific significance for faith formation of fourteen to seventeen years old youth as these are connected to their moral formation as well. The connection between faith and moral formation is clarified later in this study. The researcher discusses these modes again in chapter five and six as they have been underestimated in a holistic approach to the faith formation of these youth at the expense of promoting the prominent (and if I may say traditional) ones. Engaging youth constructively has greater impact than setting up rules and structures. These Christian practices also enable youth to develop a Christ-like lifestyle if they are practiced regularly.

#### i) Worship

Participating in worship is an expression and renewal of Christian service as act of faith. The reason for being involved in Christian service should be belief in God through actions being grounded in a relationship with God (Groome, 1980: 65). James Wilhoit (2008:48-49) includes celebrating the sacraments as an aspect of worship. It is also about creating spaces of solitude for young people. He includes prayer as act of worship. Another important aspect of worship is that of remembering (ibid: 104-113)<sup>69</sup>. Teaching young people the importance of remembering in worship increases their awareness of their need for grace which has been discussed as inseparable to their faith. This awareness ensures that they acknowledge sin in their lives and commit to growing in their faith and in this way youth begin learning the importance of fellowship within their faith community. Here they are not preoccupied with other members' sin and shortcomings but with their own (ibid: 111). Worship through the faith community also reminds young people of the grace they have

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<sup>68</sup> The four gospels teaches over one hundred acts of devotion that Christ lived by which serves as example for young people. Jesus was concerned with growing in his relationship with God through adopting an overall lifestyle of personal and corporate communion with his Father (Wilhoit, 2008:40-14).

<sup>69</sup> Cross referenced with Judges 2:10 which says after that generation diesd, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he has done for Israel and also Ecclesiastes 12:1a which says remember your creator in the days of your youth (ibid:105).

received through the cross Jesus Christ bore. The faith community enables them to also experience new and surprising readings of Scripture (Migliore, 2004:241). Listening enables speaking to God (Wilhoit, 2008: 40). Nel and Thesnaar (2006:94) note that music (as a form of worshipping God) influences the formation of youth identity as well. They add that this is especially true in a South African context in which identity was previously measured by race but is now greatly influenced by the kinds of music youth listen to<sup>70</sup>. Youth need to also be taught that these modes (disciplines) are not what make them righteous Christians, instead they are placed in a position to be drawn into Christ fully. Paul emphasized this teaching in Phillipians 3:1-14. (Powell, et al, 2013:36; Wilhoit, 2008:45). This positioning changes one's attitude as well because it expands one's love, obedience and repentance toward a deepening trust in God. A change in attitude was also evidenced as integral to one's spiritual growth.

## ii) Service

James Wilhoit (2008: 147- 160) says that responding to God in acts of loving service cannot only be meaningful when it is based on prior commitment to Him through conversion because being a Christ follower requires that life in response to God is lived. Through service, young people become teachable and gain a genuine motivation for learning about God and His Word. Service enables opportunities for these youth to practice what they have learnt. Youth are to be equipped for the areas of service they are involved in so that they understand that their response is not obligatory but gospel orientated (ibid: 150). It is important at this point to note that youth need to also learn about themselves and what they are capable and incapable of whilst being involved in ministry. This is important because many youth emulate their leadership not realizing that they are gifted in different areas (Fowler, Osmer and Dykstra). Young people should be to become a witness to all the people they relate to. This includes being taught hospitality because if they are taught how to serve and love others in whichever contexts they encounter them, less people will rely on the faith community solely for what they can consume (Wilhoit, 2008: 157).

Another important aspect of Christian service as a mode of faith formation is relating (ibid: 177-180). Youth are influenced quite easily by friends they associate themselves with. They need to be encouraged to look for friendships in which they can be spiritually enriched and need to position themselves in the ministries their faith community offers (small group, youth group, Prayer meetings, etc.) for these relationships to happen. Youth need to learn the value of committing to the fellowship and realise that they need the church as much as the

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<sup>70</sup> Nel and Thesnaar (2006:94) note that hip hop is found to be the most popular music coloured youth listen to.

church needs them. Faith formation is expressed through a Christ-like church in which there is meaningful worship, compassionate service, public witness and disciple making (ibid: 180).

iii) Prayer

Prayer in its many forms strengthens one's faith and character as a Christian (Migliore, 2004: 420). Prayer needs to be practised daily as individuals and as a worship community as it is about speaking and listening to God and is conversational (Ackerman, 2001:26-27). Corporate prayer exercises are sometimes used to assist those who may not otherwise pray. The confessional, adoration and praise elements of prayer practised consistently helps grow.

iv) Partaking in sacraments

Partaking in the sacraments and getting involved in ministry are important processes for encouraging spiritual growth. The sacraments give young people the opportunity to bear public witness to their faith (Migliore, 2004: 281). Baptism and the Lord's Supper are two prominent sacraments administered and taught in the Protestant evangelical church. Baptism expresses the seriousness of one's commitment to growing in one's faith and the Lord's Supper or communion associates one with being a member of Christ's body, thus enabling the believer for works of service. These are true for the EBCOSA context as well.

Worship incorporates singing and hearing sermons (Ackerman, 2001:26-27). Liturgy, rituals and symbols of the Christian community are vital to the faith formation of its youth. Rituals, rites of passage, education and other practices (like stories) all play an influential role in shaping a young person's spirituality (Beckwith, 2010:20 & Yust, 2004: xxii). Rituals are those repetitive acts conducted to remember or reinforce the values it represents (Beckwith, 2010: 21). Most rituals in the Christian faith (as in the African traditional community) are communal and they are aimed at helping people meet God through their emotions, minds, senses and bodies (ibid). The Bible is full of stories which convey biblical truths and are expressions of real situations people face (ibid:24). The word stories is not intended to limit the biblical truth it conveys but make it easier for youth to understand who God is and how he has historically worked in different people's lives and contexts. Ivy Beckwith, specialises in children's ministry and has written extensively concerning their faith formation. She argues that young people's personal faith stories are often not taken seriously because these stories do not look like that of the adults. Swart and Yates (2012:3) confirm that youth are often not included in public discourse (of which the church is a part) despite their role within this discourse. Beckwith (ibid: 58) adds that one's faith story goes beyond a testimony to the

articulation<sup>71</sup> and ability to identify how God is active in one's life on a daily basis. Youth should be taught how to articulate their faith and spiritual life encounters with God. Faith formation should take this process seriously. Most Christian traditions raise concerns about outside cultural influences, emphasizing teaching doctrine, and the delivery of factual information about faith traditions that sometimes distract from attention to the spiritual lives of youth (Yust, et al, 2006:82).

v) Confirmation

Confirmation is another way in which youth express their desire to grow in their faith. This church ritual can become mere routine if not encouraged to embrace their faith in all spheres of their lives (Maiko, 2007:59).

The above-mentioned experiences should be integrated and not focused upon in isolation (Strommen & Hardel, 2000:19). The aims of faith formation would be to help young people begin and maintain a trusting relationship with a personal Christ, understanding and living grace, communing with God regularly, demonstrating moral responsibility, accepting congregational responsibility, demonstrating unprejudiced and loving lives, accepting authority and personal responsibility, having a hopeful and positive attitude, participating in the rituals of Christian community and engaging in mission and service (ibid: 19). Fowler's concept of creative discipleship means that various opportunities need to be made available to form the faith of these youth.

Faith formation as a process should help young people become intentional about their faith. The faith community can assist these youth by creating safe spaces in which they attain Christ-likeness in which they can reflect on the above-mentioned practices of faith formation that have defined and shaped Christian's experiences of faith over the centuries (Hall & McMinn, 2003: xi & Ackerman, 2001:135). This is important for lasting faith within these youth. By the time these youth reach early adulthood (18 years old and upwards), they do not see any value in or reasons for the Biblical content and stories of the Christian faith since they find that these are not applicable to their daily lives. Young people live according to what is morally right in their eyes according to what was taught them concerning Christianity in their earlier youth days. As young adults they become the products of how the church has prioritised its youth ministry. In most instances, it seems the church has neglected the hard work of teaching, shepherding and mentoring these youth through discipleship. The very

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<sup>71</sup> The inability to articulate one's faith as a young person is discussed under moral development later.

strengths of evangelicalism of the Protestant church serve as its weakness with regards to faith formation. A strong focus on biblical truth has helped maintain a solid foundation for faith but has also lead to inappropriate rationalism and false denigration of spiritual practices (Setran & Kiesling, 2013:23- 27).

In light of possible critique about these terms, faith formation has been described as a process affecting the life stages of youth in various ways. Christian education geared toward these youth needs to take these life stages seriously if they are serious about enhancing a faith that lasts into the adult years of these youth. The following section takes a closer look at the life stage of fourteen to seventeen years old youth and takes the various role players in their lives at this stage into consideration as this forms the thrust of this research study.

### 3.3 Faith in the life of 14- 17 year old youth

Chapter one of this dissertation described postmodern youth as deeply spiritual (Mueller, 2006:107). The problem is that these youth do not adhere to any one particular faith group because they want to be able to choose from a variety of faith systems and make up their own. Many youth have become disillusioned by orthodox Christianity in which rules are seen as the final authority. In fact, these youth do not even call themselves religious. At the root of their pluralism and relativism, postmodern youth have a deep hunger for God. It is for this reason that faith communities need to do all possible to engage these youth, helping them understand the meaning of the delinquent behaviours they are involved in and pointing them to the redemptive and transformative message of the cross (ibid: 108).

Chapter one also positioned fourteen to seventeen years old youth within a discussion of adolescence. Maiko (2007:165) notes three adolescent stages applicable in an African context, namely; 10-15years old (early), 16-24 (mid) and 25 up (late). South Africa refers to youth as 14 to 35 years old with early youth (mid- adolescence) being 14–24 years old and later youth or early adulthood being 25–34years old. This dissertation uses the specific age group of fourteen to seventeen years old youth but does not disregard its connection to being mid-adolescence. Adolescence was described as a time in life when youth realise their possibility in Christ through the developments taking place in and around them. This realization leads to an awareness that they can have a fulfilled life in Christ (Root, 2011:126-129). In Africa, it is a time where youth are experiencing initiation rites and rituals that

prepare them for adulthood with the end of this stage being marked by successfully completing traditional rituals and a sense of confirmed self-esteem. It is the age at which young people are most likely making life-long decisions about God because they have the capacity for epistemologically understanding faith (Maiko, 2007:12- 65). It is also a time when young people contemplate their identity based on how they want others to perceive them. This time in a young person's life is characterized by pubertal maturation, identity formation and much self- awareness. Time spent with parents is now replaced with time spent with peers (Powell, et al, 2011:55).

Despite the growing attention given to spirituality as an academic discipline, little emphasis has been placed on the spirituality of youth in an African context. Theories and practices regarding the spiritual lives of youth are often either constructed as methods of laying foundations for future adult spiritual work or put forth as simple adaptations of approaches developed for adults (Yust, et al, 2006: 4). This lack of age and context specific spiritual attention has exhibited itself in how churches and religious institutions have perceived youth as less worthy of planning for. Spirituality in youth should be viewed as how young people perceive and relate to God as Lord (Maiko, 2007:28). This experience is different from a childhood faith and also an adult faith since young people experience God through the influential adults in their lives. While interest in organized religion may dwindle during adolescence, interest in spirituality itself does not. Spirituality for these young people is more about finding and maintaining an inner compass than holding a set of shared beliefs (Pittman, et al, 2008: 31).

Powell, Griffin and Crawford (2013: 33- 35) emphasize that the central theme of faith has to be grace and not works when working with youth. A faith that takes grace seriously also encourages freedom from sin over sin management in these youth. Sin management is the belief that one can overcome sin by efforts and activities that will reflect trying harder to stop doing them hence the earlier emphasis on helping young people understand why Christian service is important for their faith. Focus is placed on the activities of one's faith and not the emotive (guilt or conviction) part thereof (Wilhoit, 2008, 61-62). Young people should be helped in discovering and strengthening their trust in Jesus Christ. This helps them understand that growing in faith takes time and able to explore their faith in safe environments. Trusting Christ needs to be exemplified as the primary calling God has for them. Yust (2004:19) describes six themes that are related to the faith of young people that cannot be detached from it, namely; belonging, thanksgiving, giftedness, hospitality,

understanding and hope. Young people need to feel loved and accepted by God and also the faith community. In this way they learn to live lives that are grateful for God's provision and presence in their lives. An important aspect of being a young person is knowing that you have something to offer and that others appreciate your contribution. Through giftedness youth are taught to discern what their talents and spiritual gifts are so that they are not easily drawn into comparing themselves to their peers which they are likely to do at this stage in their lives. When these gifts are shared with the body of Christ they learn what it means to be hospitable Christians. Youth need spaces where they could reflect on their faith formation process. Finally hope helps these youth understand that there is more to this life than the present. This is very important in a society in which immediate gratification is constantly being promoted.

The discussion thus far has focussed on those components of faith relevant to the specific age and developmental stage of fourteen to seventeen years old youth. Young people do not require a faith different from that of adults but the reality that their faith is connected to identity as young people; how they make choices and behave (morality) and also how they are developing physically and cognitively should be considered. It would be naïve to conduct a research study on the faith formation of this age group without considering relevant academic theories which assist an understanding of their identity, morality and faith. A closer reflection on identity, moral and faith development theory as relevant to the faith formation of these youth is now considered.

### 3.3.1 Key theories relevant to understanding faith of 14-17 year old

The following section incorporates voices from the disciplines of psychology and sociology because these fields have conducted extensive research on human development. An in depth understanding of youth faith formation requires interaction with how young people develop physically, emotionally, cognitively, morally and spiritually.

#### 3.3.1.1 Identity development

At the beginning of the 1960's, psychologist James Marcia developed four basic stages of identity development based on the work of sociologist, Erik Erikson (Marcia, 1966). Each of these stages is focussed on the exploration and commitment of youth to a personal identity. Exploration enables young people to reflect on the options at their disposal whereas commitment to a chosen identity refers to the definitive decisions they eventually make (Powell, et al, 2013:56).

Stage one is characterized as one of identity diffusion (correlated to Ackerman's dependant stage of spiritual growth) in which youth have not even thought about their identity. They are not sure what they believe about key issues such as faith, politics, gender roles, or occupation, nor are they concerned with them. In other words they have not taken any initiative and ownership of who they are. They are not willing to explore in order to commit at this stage (ibid: 57).

Stage two is one of foreclosure in which definite opinions about their identity come to the fore, but those opinions have been inherited from external forces such as parents, peers, culture and education rather than cultivated from within themselves. At puberty young people question all that they have blindly relied on earlier in their lives (Erikson, 1995: 235). Reliance on how the other sees them, forces the youth to abandon their self-love to please voices that they feel measures up to them achieving happiness by imitating these voices (Erikson, 1980: 19). These youth need the supportive influence of authentic Christian adults in their lives during this time. They also need to have strong Christian friendships which encourage and model Christ-like behaviours during this time. Foreclosed youth are usually the ones who present as if they have it all together at youth group. They are also the ones most likely to be given leadership positions at church (Powell, et al, 2013:57). These external forces can cause youth to remain in this stage through the ways in which interaction takes place. For example, a church that does not invest in teaching its youth biblical principles could hinder them from growing into who they are meant to be in Christ (Root, 2011:71). The problem in this stage is that their faith has been based on them serving as a role model and not on a personal relationship with Christ. This is evidenced when they face challenging situations or suffering in their lives (Powell, et al, 2013:57). This means identity has been chosen without questioning or doubt (Dean, 2010: 224). Youth identity development takes place within relationships that they trust. By trust it is meant that these youth depend on the relationships with peers, parents and youth leaders to guide them in their journey as Christians. This trust is also a sense of security that enables them to separate themselves from these relationships in order to discover who they are. Post- modern society seems to have made this easier as many young people end up fending for themselves because the adults in their lives are busy at work, with ministry, and so forth. This is why young people's experiential behaviour in an effort to find self gets labelled as rebellion. Whatever they do that does not conform to adult behaviours is unacceptable. Conflict becomes a necessary part of

this detachment process and rebellion ends up aiding the identity formation process through establishing autonomy from the adults (Root, 2011:73).

Stage three; the period of moratorium (correlated to Ackerman's mutual competence stage of spiritual growth) can most likely be associated with the young people researched in this study (14-17 years old). It is the period in which these youth challenge the faith and belief system they have inherited (Powell, et al, 2013:58). This period is also marked by doubts and uncertainties about what they believe. Youth in the moratorium phase are questioning the faith narrative they had inherited from their family as they encountered new voices from outside influences but they have not committed themselves yet. An important aspect of identity development for a fourteen to seventeen years old youth is the realization that they need to lose self in order to gain self. They do this through getting involved in inappropriate behaviours in efforts to maintain who they are. Automatically teaching conclusions without sufficient room for contemplation at this stage tends to rob these youth of a healthy faith formation process because Christianity ends up being taught as behaviour management instead of a committed faith.

Stage four; achievement (correlated to Ackerman's interdependence stage of spiritual growth) is characterized as having committed to a set of beliefs, values and standards of your own (Powell, et al, 2013:58). The young person has now gained a sense of self after experimentation and questioning has been successful. To the Christian, this achievement of identity can only take place when there has been a connection between the young person's understanding of God and also how their identity is formed. It is then evident that young people's salvation experiences have not merely been based on whether they were converted (saved) or not (Root, 2011: 65). Achieving identity then becomes achieving a sense of disciplined devotion as practical theologian, Andrew Root (2011:70) describes it. This devotion is based on God's grace and faithfulness and is expressed through Christian service. The importance of this change in a young person's life lies in the realization that sacrifice becomes a part of being a Christian. This goes against the opinion, that many young people seem to have, that God (and others) exists to please the self. The Christian faith is lived out as a consequence of a self so identified with Christ that it willingly gives itself for another (ibid: 71). It should be noted that a young person in this stage can also be experiencing the three previous stages at different points in their lives at the same time. They may have reached maturity in one area but may be wrestling with a challenge in a different area (Powell, et al, 2013:58). The content of identity can change over time but the structures necessary

should be in place (Dean, 2010:230). Each of the stages of identity development discussed above is relevant to understanding the fourteen to seventeen years old youth. This understanding empowers the church in its preparation for the faith formation of this age group.

The role social networks play in the identity development of youth should not be underestimated here. Youth are linked to many different platforms in which they received inconsistent feedback from peers they have never even met (Powell, 2013:53). There are so many opinions to what they post online verbally or visually, opinions that influence their identity and also faith. Another reality is the open access youth have to society. Many are involved in sports, arts, church and other community focussed efforts in which they are constantly interacting with different people giving them feedback about their identity (ibid: 54). All these voices delay the identity formation of these youth resulting in most youth only discovering their identities when they are young adults still not knowing who they are and what they want to become in life (ibid: 55). It is important to realize these tensions present in young people lives in order to guide them appropriately. They too wrestle with the notion of losing themselves to gain the new being in Christ.

Fourteen to seventeen years old young people are faced with tough choices regarding their identity as Christians on a daily basis. They are constantly taking the risk of standing up for what they believe in the face of possibly being isolated. Youth experience salvation as a daily and persistent request because relationships form an integral part of identity formation and also faith formation (Root, 2011: 65). The challenge is that many of these relationships are distorted by our sinful natures resulting in distorted perceptions of self. Youth view themselves through the eyes of the other (peers, family, etc.). When the people they trust disappoint them they question who they are and also what they believe. The good thing about this period in their lives is that they have a passion for what they do decide to pursue. They use their intuition to discern which of these relationships are valuable to their formation processes. Even though these youth do not articulate their desire for salvation, they decide whose message is appropriate and welcome in their lives because they are not yet concerned with the eschatological (future) aspect of faith but the here and now thereof (ibid: 67-68).

This is also the time that they have new capacities for faith, for possibility (or) for dread (Root, 2011:69). This realization that they need to relinquish their old self creates potential for them to better grasp and personalize their faith. Identity should then become a

consistent, durable sense of self that gives them confidence that they will not be lost but instead gain something to live for. Young people take on different personalities in different contexts during their exploration of personal identity. They take on a false self in which they act in ways they know to be different from their core being when they feel that their real self has been rejected by parents, peers and other influential others in their lives. This results in them having low self-esteem, feeling depressed and hopeless which prolongs the journey to self discovery (Berger (2000:502). This identity crisis<sup>72</sup> is inevitable in a young person's search for the self and is usually during the moratorium phase that James Marcia proposes. This is the time when youth synthesize all prior identifications in order to establish their own. The crisis is a time in which safe space is needed to engage with the risks necessary to discover themselves. This crisis is important for the development of young people.

Physical development, family background and social environment all influence the identity of a young person but are not restricted to these influences (Powell, et al, 2013:51). Christian identity infiltrates all spheres of one's life and not only Christian contexts. The Christian faith is not measured by the standards of identity formation because one grows in one's faith through the trial and error happening whilst growing up it is a matter of what Christ does to incorporate us into the coherence of the divine self, transcending the sands of culture and the human lifecycle with a story of divine love offered on our behalf. Youth need to understand this (Dean, 2010: 63 & 79). Identity is also formed through the reactions and responses of others around you (Louw, 1999: 163). Youth are not only trying to discover an individual identity but also a communal one. Identity formation, just as faith and moral formation is a lifelong process. A Christian identity has to be pursued despite the doubts and fears one may have. Identity development is about how well young people respond to the situations in their lives. This includes the degree at which they take personal responsibility for their reactions as well. Youth need time and changing life circumstances to work out or sense God's love throughout their entire lives, hence the importance of trial and suffering for an authentic faith (Powell, et al, 2013:61). Theologically, it concerns how these youth discover God's calling upon their lives, whether they accept or reject it. That these youth have freedom to respond to this call is entirely God's grace because Christian identity is ultimately vested in a relationship with God who through His Holy Spirit daily transforms the young person. There will always be new areas in one's life in which transformation needs to take place and as such this identity is not dependent on the youth's capabilities or skills but on grace (Louw,

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<sup>72</sup> The term identity crisis was coined by Psychologist Erik Erikson (1968:16-17) during World War II to refer to some central disturbance in severely conflicted young people whose sense of confusion was due to a war within themselves. This was at the time Erikson was working at a Veterans rehabilitation Clinic.

2012: 62 & 70-71). Practical theologian, Professor Daniel Louw (ibid), agrees that each individual is in search of a meaningful life but grounds this meaning in Christ. Grace helps the Christian young person to evaluate their responsibility and purpose in their lives with Christ. Conversely to the other religions that Fowler included in his research study, Louw argues that the Christian life and identity gives the young person hope for the future. This hope is necessary during the challenges every young Christian will face.

### 3.3.1.2 Moral development

The term morality has been mentioned throughout this chapter in close connection to faith formation (and the modes thereof). Youth should be considered models of the faith because they have insights that are valuable to the community of faith because they have intrinsic worth and both rights and responsibilities that correspond to that worth (DeVries in Yust, et al, 2006:58). Halonen and Santrock (1999:578) note that people with an intrinsic religious motivation have greater competence and control over their lives. They note these people are also less prejudiced towards other faith groups as more focus is placed on their own faith. This is why the questions young people ask should not be ignored, but taken seriously if they are expected to grow in their faith and relationship with God. They rely on getting these questions answered in order to make sound choices about their faith. These responsibilities are based on the understanding that young people are also moral agents. Cultivating the growing moral capacities and responsibilities of youth in many other ways (Yust, et al, 2006:63) strengthen the faith formation of these youth and enable them to be well-rounded Christians both in Christian and non-Christian contexts. Reflecting on the moral formation of Ricoeur, Don Browning (in<sup>73</sup> Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003:223) argues for the importance of helping young people learn the shared moral practices of a well-formed religious-moral community, and also creating spaces for them to learn the narratives that define and generate our faith in these practices. Some of these ways include, introducing them to good examples, including them in service projects and teaching them financial responsibility, helping them explore what their gifts and talents are and how this can influence their career choices and lastly, listen to their opinions on life and how they experience it. These practices are different from the faith formation practices (modes) encouraged earlier. These encourage a more holistic view on faith formation in which the daily life choices of youth are taken seriously. Just as with faith formation modes, young people should also be given the

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<sup>73</sup> Osmer & Schweitzer edit the book: *Developing a public faith: New directions in practical theology* in 2003. This book is a collection of essays from various academic scholars.

opportunity to reflect and own these practices. It is through this testing the faith that informed moral decisions are made.<sup>74</sup>

In his book *Formation of the moral self*, Johannes Van der Ven (1998) notes discipline, socialisation, value transmission and clarification and moral development as important modes through which moral formation takes place. These modes (just as in faith formation) help people lead self-regulating lives. They also form Christian character because moral decisions are affected by us being emotional beings. Moral formation takes place in the contexts of families, church, workplace, school or university and society through policies and public discourses. The concept of formation presupposes that there is an ideal to be reached whilst the concept of orientation implies that there is standard towards which one aims. This ideal should be aimed at being transformed into Christ-likeness. Koopman (2011) calls this Christo-formity as the compass by which to direct this formative process. It is interesting to note that congregational practices of prayer, baptism, communion, sabbath, hospitality, budgeting and singing all nurture moral formation on all three levels because they imagine, envision, criticise, transform and renew who we are. These practices are also important for faith formation.

The moral development of fourteen to seventeen year old youth is an important aspect of the moral formation process. Psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg (known as the father of moral development theory) developed three stages of moral development. In the first stage; (pre-conventional morality) moral development takes place through the consequences experienced from choices that the infant, toddler and youth make. The young person learns what is right from wrong based on the positive or negative behavioural consequences of their actions. At this stage the young person does not consider what impacts other people around them but only that which affects the self. The importance of the gospel message as relevant to the daily lives of these youth have already been explained. Youth who understand that this message should impact every aspect of their lives, take behavioural consequences seriously, not only for personal gain but for the benefit of those around them. The second stage; conventional morality is based on what the young person or sometimes adult can gain through the process of decision making. The moral choices young people face result in them

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<sup>74</sup> In a class lecture on Youth care and moral formation conducted at the University of Stellenbosch to a Master of Divinity student body, systematic theologian, Professor Nico Koopman (September, 2011) classified moral formation on three levels; habitat, habitus and choices or decisions we make. Our habitat which is usually society is the space in which moral formation takes place. We embody our morality through habitus, the ways in which we as people live. Thirdly, our moral formation is evident in the choices or decisions we make.

redefining the Christian faith dependent on their chosen behaviours (Setran & Kiesling, 2013:18). These youth then compromise what true Christian identity means in order to please themselves. Finally, stage three being post-conventional morality focuses on a concern for the good of the other as the basis of morality. Moral decision-making is no longer only about what affects the self but one's neighbour as well. This is important for young people to grasp as they tend to be egoistic and self-centred at fourteen to seventeen years old. According to Fowler (in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 22), Kohlberg has not taken seriously the fact that identity is formed through committing to the choices and decisions being made. This process of commitment requires further discussion.

Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton (2005: 3-7), two American Sociology professors, conducted a survey on the character of youth religion in America in 2001-2005. This was done under the National Study of Youth and Religion in an effort to discover the extent to which youth seek spirituality and how religion affects the moral reasoning and risk behaviours of these youth. These youth were between the ages 13-17 years old. The College Transition Project conducted at Fuller Youth Institute with 18 and up years old youth during 2004 to 2010 found similar findings to that of Smith and Denton's study with this later age group (Powell, et al, 2013: 29- 36). The next paragraph summarizes the findings of both these studies as relevant to the impact of moral development on the faith of these youth. <sup>75</sup>The following themes were discovered (Smith & Lundquist, 2005:26-29 & Dean, 2010:201-205):

13-17 year old youth:

- experience a multiplicity of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices and also identities. They call themselves Christians but the older cohort did not mention Jesus in this description at all. They did not have a Jesus centred view of the gospel;
- engage in deliberate practices (worship with other believers, reading Scripture, prayer, confession and forgiveness, service, how you use your body, music, faith education) of faith which play an important role in their faith. Conversely, the older cohort found faith to be an internal issue ( heart committed to the Lord) not necessitating involvement in religious practices;
- these practices have theological, spiritual and moral meaning. Conversely, the older cohort found that the level of religious activity one has, has no connection to connection to one's personal faith. This is specifically relevant to this study because most evangelical churches are losing youth in this age group.

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<sup>75</sup> The study was conducted specifically with American youth and was not restricted to the Christian faith. Youth from Judaism and Mormonism were included in the study.

- could not articulate<sup>76</sup> (explain) their faith because no one taught them how to talk about their faith or provided opportunities to do so. The older cohort had learnt the art of managing one's sin. This means that young people learn that being a Christian involves following the list of do's and don'ts. If they do not match up to the list by managing their sin effectively they decide to leave the faith. It was found that older adults had modelled this list type of Christianity rather than a gospel centred one;
- engaged in these practices centre their lives around relationships and institutions to intersect and overlap with other aspects of their lives. This means that youth need an integrative faith that agrees with an holistic understanding of faith as proposed by Neihbur (faith cube);
- are influenced greatly by the adults (parents mainly) in their lives whether positively or negatively;
- those who are involved in religious practices do better in life than those who are not. The older cohort study found that alcohol consumption and sexual activity was lower in youth that were involved in religious activities at the age of 13-17 years old.

The Christian faith of the youth in the two studies above, had very little to do with God's redemptive work in the world. Instead, it is about externally being well-behaved and loving others (Setran & Kiesling, 2013:22). This is the result of not equipping young people to make sound choices that reflect the gospel's impact in their lives at the pre-conventional level. Interestingly, faith through a belief in God as personally involved in their lives was found important to most of these youth (Smith & Lundquist, 2005:40-41). As spiritual seekers, these youth have an interest in spiritual matters but are not devoted to one particular faith tradition as they are exploring faith (ibid :73). This is why young people are so open to respecting the faith of others but does not mean that they are interested in the other faith themselves (ibid: 115). At this point, they do not see any worth in arguing about other faiths (Dean, 2010:201) because their friendships are intertwined with their religious lives. Smith and Denton theorized the faith of these youth as a Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (hereafter referred to as MTD). This instrumental view of religion, inculcates a moralistic approach to life wherein personal potentials are reached, other people like them and they feel good about themselves. Some of the benefits of MTD are that one feels good, secure and happy through service to others. God exists but not personally unless called upon in a crisis and He is not as demanding

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<sup>76</sup> Fowler (in Dykstra and Parks, 1986:38) defined articulation as translating experience and commitment into words and actions. This enables persons to be more responsive and intentional in their own faith growth. It alerts them to unrecognized conflicts, indicating readiness for growth. Commitments are consolidated, integrated, and evaluated in the process of articulation.

as the church says he is (ibid: 118- 166). This perception of religion and the Christian faith negates the importance of suffering for the faith through sacrificial love. It also negates a trust in God that goes beyond the present (Dean, 2010:64 & 78). A strong emphasis on developmental theories and the notion of self-actualization denies scriptural teaching on self-denial and taking up one's cross to follow Christ because MTD has no costs attached to it (Setran & Kiesling, 2004:38). Giddens (2001:540) notes that it is within religious sects that people tend to withdraw from society into communities of their own. These smaller communities could also be peer groups of these youth in which all members are regarded as equal participants. The notion of hierarchies is strongly challenged. The paradox of the Christian life is that this self-denial is what actually promotes and enables one's freedom in Christ. Once youth are confronted with the beauty of this paradox, they are able to embrace the benefits that come from this life. The reality is that the cost of not following Christ is more costly than only choosing those aspects of Christianity most suited to personal situations. As mentioned earlier, how young people use their time also indicates how they are being spiritually formed (ibid: 40). Life experiences of these youth are important to determine this. No life experience is worthless as these lay foundations for later faith experiences. The notion that they will follow Christ sometime in the future should be addressed during faith formation processes because this could lead to delayed commitment. The only way one will grow in the future is through considering and taking up the present costs of following Christ. Youth should not be deceived into thinking that present youthful indulgences will have no impact on their future (ibid: 42).

Smith and Denton (2005: 220-229) formed three moral categories that religious youth fall into, namely; devoted, seekers and disengaged. The devoted young person is the young person that attends services regularly, depends on faith for daily life, feels extremely close to God, involved in youth group, prays regularly and reads scriptures occasionally. They do not smoke cigarettes or marijuana nor drink alcohol, and do not miss or do poorly at school. They believe in waiting for marriage to have sex and regularly contemplate the meaning of life. On the other hand, they do not believe that there is one definite right or wrong for everybody. These youth can be equated to those still experiencing identity foreclosure in which conformity to adult approved behaviour is confused with the real self. Dean (2010:49).<sup>77</sup> The seekers (also referred to as sporadic) are spiritual but not devoted to one specific faith because they are still exploring their faith and are open to a multiplicity of truth (Smith and Denton, 2005: 73). The religiously disengaged young person is non-religious and doubtful but has

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<sup>77</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean is professor of youth, church and culture at Princeton Theological Seminary.

some belief in a god. This young person follows mere processes around them without intentionally doing so (ibid: 86-87). Dean argues that a devoted faith is evidenced through confession of one traditional creeds, belonging to a faith community, being called and having future hope based on one's God story. These need to be evidenced not merely believed and in order to do this these things need to be explained (why and how to) within the contexts of their faith communities. Faith formation that takes the discipleship of these youth seriously must move beyond MTD. It must reshape their priorities towards a costly sacrifice in which they are transformed daily through in life in Christ. Spiritual growth encouraged through right moral behaviour encourages the sin management mentioned earlier. The emphasis here is on individual behaviours and not on the underlying sin. Focus on external behaviours fails to attend to the causes. (Setran & Kiesling, 2013:30). Addressing these external behaviours are only short-term solutions. Youth need to be led to the underlying root-system that causes these behaviours. David Setran and Chris Kiesling (2013:31-32), professors in Christian formation and human development, argue that what these youth perceive as good things in their lives could become ultimate priorities vying for their attention in the place of a relationship with God. They add that the Christian life is not so much about balancing one's priorities but about prioritizing God with an undivided heart.

The relationship and practical connection between identity and moral development of youth is important in understanding the faith development of youth.

### 3.3.1.3 Faith Development

Faith development cannot be considered apart from the definition of faith and spiritual discussed earlier (3.2.1). Fowler's understanding of faith was discussed in this earlier section but the main critique to his theory revolves around this definition which is the focus of the present discussion.

James Fowler, developed faith development theory through six stages of development in 1987. More than one hundred doctoral dissertations on this topic were completed by 1999 of which most were published in the United States of America. Few were published in Canada (5), Germany (2), England (2) and Finland (1). Most of these projects were empirical in nature yet are only accessible to academics. Some (Victor Clore and John Canavan) researchers have reflected on the relationship between faith development and moral development theories. Some (Theresa Sallnow, Pamela Morgan and Margaret Cowden) have also reflected on faith development specifically for women but were limited to one particular

stage (individuating- reflective stage). The definition of faith, as Christian faith was not found applicable to these studies.

Faith development theory has been used often in the disciplines religious education and pastoral care (Fowler, 1987). James Fowler bases his work on his doctoral supervisor, H.R. Niebuhr's conceptions of faith<sup>78</sup> integrating this with the psychodynamic theories of sociologist, Erik Erikson and psychologists, Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget. Erikson views faith as the result of successful reciprocity between the child and the first person responsible for its upbringing. This faith originates in regularly repeated expressions of mutual recognition between the child and its caregiver (in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003:46 secondary). Young people develop in their faith through images, symbols and stories and the emotions tied to them. Fowler places emphasis on the integration of moral, identity and faith development with its foundation in a systematic theology perspective. Faith development theory places great emphasis on ethics and moral considerations. (Steib in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003:16-21). Fowler's conceptualisation of faith is not restricted to the Christian faith but to all religious communities. This dissertation elaborates on those stages and concepts relevant to fourteen to seventeen years old youth but faith development theory is not limited to these.

As noted earlier in this chapter, faith as disposition involves both emotion and cognition. It also involves belief (patterned knowing), commitment or devotion (valuing) and construction of meaning (Fowler, 1987: 56). In his stages of faith development theory, Fowler divided the concept of faith into five levels (stages); primal, intuitive or projective faith, mythic-literal, synthetic-conventional and individuating-reflective faith.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> As noted earlier, H. R. Niebuhr called this the faith cube (in Dykstra & Parks, 1986). It is not possible to address all the sides of this cube at the same time and youth going through a period of identity formation may experience these different sides to faith at different times in their faith journey.

<sup>79</sup> Primal faith happens during infancy in which a sense of trust and loyalty towards the environment into which one was born and towards one's primary caregiver is developed. Intuitive or projective faith (also referred to as emotive faith) happens from the time a child begins communicating as a period in which the child makes meaning of life through story, symbols, dreams and experiences. Constructions of faith at this stage are drawn through symbols and images of visible power and size. (Fowler, 1987:59). These images can be deeply embedded with the emotional state of the child. Perhaps these symbols and images could be connected to the modes of faith formation discussed earlier. They can either be related to guilt and negative emotional states or love and positive states, each of which can last a lifetime. The child needs controls or a sense of structure, usually in the form of parenting, at this stage. This faith stage can be correlated with stage one of Marcia and Ackerman mentioned earlier. Stage two is depicted as one in which concrete and literal decisions are made and understood.

Mythic-literal faith (also referred to as emotive or cognitive faith), happens between six and eight years old when a change in thought patterns occurs. Narrative and story are used as meaning making tools. Children share who

Synthetic-conventional faith begins during early adolescence through the development of abstract thinking (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 29-30; Fowler, 1987: 63- 67). Through deepening relationships with non-familial members one begins seeing the self as the other sees you. This is applicable to all the significant relationships the youth has (at school, on sports field, at home, in church, et al). This stage is correlated with moratorium identity formation in which all perceptions of self should be integrated with personal beliefs, morals and perceptions of self, resulting in personality becoming a conscious concern at this stage (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 29; Fowler, 1987:65). This fragile stage brings with it a strong need to maintain close connections with others and also a need to differentiate self from others. There is an intense desire and need to feel included. Youth in this faith stage are looking for the meaning of life and its applicability to daily life. Values, commitment and relationships are important to them now as their worth is linked to the loyalty of others. How others see them and give feedback is important (ibid). They are also in a quest of identifying with a God who is responsive, sympathetic and trustworthy and are capable of seeing God through other people through shifting from a personal to a communal identity (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 29-30; Fowler, 1987: 64 & 66; Maiko, 2007: 6). How self-identity is understood is derived from the relationships they have. Reflecting and living one's faith as meaningful is difficult because of societal, economic and political influences. It is only later that symbols and rituals are examined critically. When a young person's identity is supported within the circle of those they value, they will also work at adopting a set of attitudes, beliefs and values that will link them to those whom their faith and values depend on. This is most likely, their family or peers. At this stage young people are still dependant on institutional roles for maintaining faith and identity. In other words, youth at this age are still dependent on the church in forming and maintaining their Christian identity.

Youth between seventeen and twenty years old experience (mid and late adolescence) an individuative – reflective faith (also referred to as owned faith).<sup>80</sup> Self-reflection is no longer solely dependent upon others because personal responsibility for their faith needs to be

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they are by telling stories of their experiences and belonging (Fowler, 1987: 61). God is seen as stern, powerful and as a just parent or ruler (1987: 62) who rewards good and punishes bad. Personal needs and interests are important at this stage – all that governs reason. Here the child is depicted as having the ability to make conscious efforts to give meaning to one's life even though logical operations are unstable at this point. Moral behaviour is formed through consequences. Lasting images can be formed at this stage. It is possible that adolescents and adults still find themselves at this stage and if this is so it is reflected through manipulation.

<sup>80</sup> The researcher is aware that this faith stage is broader than the age range (14-17) for what should be happening in this stage. Adherence to the initiation of this faith stage and placing the necessary structures and formation processes in place at this stage is given.

taken at this stage (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 30-31; Fowler 1987: 68). Youth at this faith stage question symbols, stories and rituals of their faith in order to establish authenticity, autonomy and clarity about their faith (ibid). In an article on Faith Crossroads and Social Networks (2009), Carlton Johnstone argues that the transition from inherited faith to owned faith is most likely to happen at the individuating – reflective faith stage. Inherited faith has been described (footnote 30) as the faith of the young person's primary caregiver. Owned faith is attained after the search for faith has taken place. Questioning within safe spaces is deemed necessary at this stage. It is here that an individual faces a choice between choosing to follow or walk away from faith (Johnstone, 2009: 43). Influential factors at this stage could be one's social networks and also geographic mobility. This faith transition is gradual and can develop over time. Youth realise that at the juncture of the faith crossroad lies an ethical imperative requiring consistency between belief and practice. Faith ownership involves living out one's faith and this is why they are not eager to pursue this route (ibid: 49). Many young adults turn away from an inherited faith when they leave home for university or to live on their own. This, of course, is not true for all as some continue living out their faith (Powell, et al, 2013). The difference is that when a person has internalised beliefs and values at this time they will continue to identify with them despite having moved away from the referent group and social support network. They will however seek out a similar social network in the place of destination (Johnstone, 2009: 51). This is an important part of the process for attaining spiritual maturity.

It is important that the faith of young people is not confused with gaining adult approval. Adults generally approve of those who portray younger versions of themselves and mistake what Johnstone (2009) terms a conformational faith for a mature faith. A mature faith is expressed by a young person who structures their developing selfhood around a view of God, a faith community, a sense of call, and an eternal hope (Dean, 2010: 53). This statement presupposes that the young person takes responsibility for not only their faith but their lifestyle as well. Youth are agents of their own development and need consistent messages that support their healthy development (Quinn, 2008:76).

Within in a Christian context, this is the time when many faith communities are losing youth. These youth have either changed faith communities based on personal preferences or forsaken their inherited faith. In Africa, this individuation takes places between fourteen and seventeen years old when youth are expected to take the responsibility of growing in their faith upon themselves (Maiko, 2007:169). A relational theology is necessary as youth need to

experience and understand God and His activity in their lives on a daily basis. Youth are capable at this stage of committing to an authentic relationship with Christ if they experience God active in their life situations (ibid: 15). As young people mature cognitively they are able to better understand more doctrines and theories of faith. They are able to question theologies of their childhood but can only do so critically and responsibly when guided within a safe space (ibid: 59).

Movement between these faith development stages not does happen automatically because of age or physical development. Similarly to identity development, the transition between these stages happens when a crisis has been experienced in the existing stage. This crisis is most likely caused by external factors within familial, ecclesial and societal relationships. This crisis causes disruption, pain, confusion and a sense of loss (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 28). Youth need to embrace this as part of their faith journey realizing that how one develops as a Christian is an ongoing process in which the young person deepens, expands and reconstitutes their faith several times along their faith journey (in Dykstra & Parks, 1986:40 & Fowler, 1987:37).

The book *Developing a public faith* (Osmer & Schweitzer, 2003) is a discussion and critique of Fowler's theory of faith development as portrayed in each of his books from an American perspective. The findings thereof will be discussed along with the findings from *Christian Perspectives on Faith Development*; a book published in 1992 (Astley & Francis) discussing and critiquing Fowler's stages of faith. This book is written from an English perspective. An earlier (American) compilation of essays on Faith development and Fowler (Dykstra & Parks, 1986) is also considered in this section. Fowler's definition of faith includes contents of faith relevant to his theory of developmental changes. The faith does not necessarily change but the experiences of the person developing does even though these experiences have an impact on one's faith. Fowler does not, however, clarify how his understanding of faith is different from religious adherence. He chose a definition that applies to his theory and as such is not limited to one particular religious group. According to Fowler, faith means the same thing structurally and dynamically in every religion. The main difference lies in the contents thereof. Dykstra adds that the brevity of the term requires that scholars make choices for the definitions they opt for and this is what Fowler did by choosing a definition most applicable to his theory (Dykstra in & Parks, 1986: 50). In *Christian Perspectives*, Nelson (in Astley & Francis, 1993:63) argues that Fowler's definition of faith refers to a human quality and not Christian faith. He notes that faith development theory

should not be imposed on Christian principles as these are not compatible but these can bear relevance to youth ministry. An understanding of faith as a universal phenomenon has been inconsistent through the stages being promoted (Steib in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003:21).

Fowler's research methods (using data collected from discussions with various students he taught) create limitations to his findings as relevant for all religious groups. Nelson argues that most of Fowler's research sample were Christians and devout Jews. He (Nelson) is uncertain whether the six faith stages Fowler proposes are applicable to all faith groups and traditions. Nelson (1993: 73) confirms that human faith does not develop but man's understanding about life and faith changes with experience and grappling with complexities. Fowler (1993:73) studies people who have a religious faith and attempts to work from their statements back to a stage of human faith.

Faith development does not consider the role of culture not does it pay enough attention to the emotional aspect of faith. Nelson is also uncertain whether it is wise that adolescent faith (in which much questioning is taking place) can be placed within a set stage. Conversely Friedrich Schweitzer and Richard Osmer (2003:7) argue that faith development theory does indeed address societal and cultural issues and as such offers a unique contribution to the future of the public life of Christians. These researchers place faith development within the four tasks of practical theology to validate its relevance for the church and society. The core arguments against faith development theory deals with the contents of the faith being described, the optimistic structure of the stages not paying attention to negative circumstances and also not much attention being placed on the contexts in which people find themselves (Steib in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003:22).

Gabriele Klappenecker (in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003:43) says that she understands Fowler's stages of faith as the development of relationships in an attempt for finding meaning in one's life. Niebuhr understands faith as relational because this faith is connected to one's morality. Responding to God is an act of responsible decision making. Faith could either replace God (henotheism) or it could help grow in faith. Christian faith defined as relatedness to God does not allow a person to withdraw from cultural life or to avoid responsibility for society (ibid: 44). Kohlberg's theory is not associated with religion or theology and only reflects on religion as part of moral formation in stage seven of his theory. These stages are progressive, hierarchical and gender specific (ibid: 45). An intentional effort needs to be made to nurture one's faith. The notion of faith development seems to allude to an inevitable and

predictable process that naturally happens as young people grow up. This approach seems to downplay the more mystical, relational, and divinely gifted understandings of spirituality (Yust, et al, 2006:8-9).

Dykstra (Dystra & Parks, 1986:2) further argues that Fowler's faith development theory addresses faith and the religious life (and not necessarily the Christian life). Niebuhr's influence on Fowler included this religious pluralism and psychological developments because Fowler's theory was primarily (but not restricted to) linked to the disciplines of religious education and pastoral care. This was because these scholars believed that faith helps people articulate who they are, where they have been and helps direct one's future. By religious pluralism, these scholars considered it naïve to see the notion of faith as exclusive to the Christian faith because this limits faith in its richness gained from other faith traditions. Psychological developments were included as a means of interpreting and understanding human religious experience. Fowler considered the psychology of human religious experience, the psychology of religion and finally how these influenced religious education (ibid: 5). Fowler's theory is only one way of holding together what may be a universal human experience (ibid: 4). This theory integrated the others discussed earlier because it found close connections between people's faith and their personal identity. People use this faith to address challenges to their identity (ibid: 7). Parks (in Dystra & Parks, 1986:143) adds that Fowler's theory needs to be understood through the lens of him firstly a theologian and ethicist and then a psychologist and social scientist. Understood as such, one would understand why emphasis is placed on the moral capacity of people at different stages has implications for ethical (normative) issues. The theological truth missed in Fowler's theory is that of the mystery of faith. This considered would add value to faith formation processes.

Conventional faith is referred to as conformist faith in that it is based on significant others in one's life (Van der Ven in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003: 191). Not all human development can be stage based. Stages are not necessarily sequential. Fowler responds by emphasizing that the key role players in one's faith formation are the self, significant others and the ultimate other (in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003: 233). He adds that faith development theory is not merely about the structural aspects of faith but intrinsically the contents of faith as exhibited through who we are emotionally through the rituals and practices we are involved in. He also stresses faith as relational. This faith should impact one's social context by default. Practical theologians, Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks agree that the critical issue with Fowler's faith development theory is with his understanding of the nature of faith. They

(Dystra and Parks) are not in agreement with faith being restricted to a human universal phenomenon, as it is a lifestyle encompassing human beings' response to God's activity in the world. Fowler's description of faith is too broad in an effort to fit it into processes of human development (Dykstra & Parks, 1986:9).

Fowler (1987:67) argues that his faith development theory (inclusive of its stages), is tracing the path by which persons in community become subjects before God and increase in their capacities for self-awareness and self-reflection in order to respond to Him appropriately in a relationship with Him. It helps overcome the tendency to become dualistic (separate spiritual from physical) in our faith (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 39). According to Fowler (1987:54-55) faith development theory should contribute to theological anthropology because man has a natural capacity for a faith relationship with God and this capacity can be corrupted or misdirected. This is another reason for conducting an empirical study focussed on faith development specifically. The challenge is that developmental theories were not formulated with religious education as its goal. They do not focus on learning or even the ecclesial traditional influences that come with it. Fowler's theory assists in this regard but is still not exhaustive. All these theories are based on generalizations which go against relational youth ministry. Individual needs, contexts and experiences of young people differ and should not be excluded in their faith formation processes (Dysktra in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 260 & 262). For evangelical Protestants, faith formation cannot be equated on the same level as human development even though this development plays an important role. Theories of identity, moral and faith development are inter-dependant and should be viewed as such in order to develop a holistic understanding of the young person and what they are thinking, feeling and experiencing. These theories inform the church's approaches to and teaching on faith formation (Groome, 1980: 73; Dystra & Parks, 1986:11). Faith formation interacts with, yet is distinct from, moral and faith development and it is also a core construct of identity formation (Quinn, 2008: 75). The theological notions of giftedness, thanksgiving, hospitality, understanding and hope proposed as modes of faith formation in youth ministry cannot be separated from a developmental understanding of these youth (Yust, 2004: xxiv).

Consequently, faith formation of young people must not forget the mystery involved in the faith formation process (Powell, et al, 2013:51). Each young person is unique and develops in unique ways. Not all youth who fit into certain criterion will become faithful Christians. Acknowledging that a fool-proof faith formation program, even in the most conducive contexts and with the best role models on place is not going helping every young

person grow in their faith journey is important in the Christian faith (ibid:52). Fowler (in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 30) does acknowledge that the questioning of the individuative-reflective faith stage could lead to self-deception because it does not acknowledge mystery of faith. Faith formation should teach and train young people to follow Christ through his enabling power of grace (Wilhoit, 2008:39).

The faith formation of fourteen to seventeen year old youth cannot be holistically understood apart from an understanding of these youth's identity, moral and faith development. These developmental theories do not necessarily form the basis of ecclesial faith formation programs but can assist the church in developing these programs and processes. There are also various influences which impact the faith formation of this age group besides these developmental processes. A holistic faith formation process needs to take these factors into consideration as well.

### 3.3.2 Influential factors in the faith formation of 14-17 years old youth

The research question of this research study set out to explore what factors hinder and enhance the faith formation of fourteen to seventeen years old youth. The role that family, faith communities, culture and society plays in the faith formation of youth has been mentioned at different points throughout this dissertation yet not specified. Strommen and Hardel (2000) discuss faith formation through the varying role players in a young person's life. They focus on four levels of formation, namely; the family, church, culture and community. The primary focus of these scholars' perspective is that the family is at the forefront of this formation process (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 36). They believe that it is a biblical imperative that the family pass on their faith to their children. It is through the family that the church, community and broader society are impacted by the faith of these youth. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 104) believe that faith should be passed on to youth through close familial relationships within the home. Christian education must therefore take place through these established relationships. They also discuss the value of church being a family to these youth during their faith formation process (ibid: 156). It is for this reason that they encourage a partnership between the church and family in which families are equipped by the church who then sends out families who can transform their communities and broader societies. How faith is experienced on these four levels is important for the faith formation of youth. The researcher, however, argues that this faith formation process could be both

hindered and enhanced by these varying influences in these young people's lives. The family is indeed given the biblical mandate of passing on their faith to these youth but post-modern society demands much of the time of these youth in the church and culture in which they live. Strommen and Hardel (ibid: 257) discuss how the family and church should impact their communities and culture. The researcher is of the opinion that the communities and cultures of out which these youth come actually have a louder voice in these young people's lives than the family and church does. The following section will discuss these role players as positive (enhancement) and negative (hindrance) influential factors that need to be considered when researching and planning for the faith formation of 14-17 years old youth. These were also tested through an empirical study with the results thereof being discussed in chapter four and five of this dissertation.

### 3.3.2.1 The role of the family

Postmodern society has influenced the home in such a way that parents do not make time to invest in their children's emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Faith formation and passing on Christian values are left to the schools and the Christian organizations they attend (Powell, et al; Smith & Denton, et al). Youth can also be powerful educators in the faith of their parents (Groom in Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003:203). In Catholic tradition, parents together with the ecclesial and social community are responsible for assisting in the faith formation of its youth. This faith tradition relies on parents for the administration of sacraments to their children. Confirmation along with infant baptism is considered affirmation of a mature spiritual life (Yust, et al, 2006:86). Faith formation is a collective responsibility of the faith community. At times this community even plays the role of family since some families do not feel able to do so. First communion teaches young people devotion to this faith community. The traditional focus of family interaction is fading. The busyness of parents and youth do not allow for consistent interaction resulting in these youth taking longer to form their Christian identities. Youth feel isolated as they struggle for identity without parental support. They need this support and consistency thereof (Powell, 2013:54).

Families have extraordinary power to shape the lives of their youth because parents are essential actors in their faith journey (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 7). Traditional African cultures emphasize the role of families when it comes to raising young people (Healey & Sybertz, 1996, Bujo & Muya, 2005). In these faith communities, faith nurturing by the church starts at the family because faith is a relational issue to youth so the best biblical interpretation of who God is will be experienced in the family as the most consistent relational model they

have (Maiko, 2007:58). The research conducted by Christian Smith and Melinda Denton (mentioned earlier in moral development) revealed that the most important social influence in shaping young people's spiritual lives were those modelled and taught by their parents. The conversations and stories parents and grandparents tell about God should be so contagious that it motivates youth to have a relationship with God (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 77). This means that modelling in the home becomes crucial. How parents act, use their time, talk and commit themselves models the values they hold. Parents should also share their testimonies and allow spaces for discussion about faith in their homes. This enables youth to vent matters they are uncertain about in a safe space. One aspect of modelling would be parents getting involved in ministry. This involvement and how it is done teaches youth the importance of getting involved themselves (ibid: 95-96). Becoming gospel-orientated parents, communicating moral values, being involved in service activities and sharing one's faith at home are all contributing factors in one's faith formation. Parents who are gospel-orientated place emphasis on studying the Word of God and on relationships rather than rules. These parents are intentional about their own spiritual growth and the growth of their children's faith as well. Youth tend to adopt the values and beliefs of their parents (ibid: 84).

It should be emphasized that involvement in good works at the expense of sharing one's faith at home can be detrimental to the faith formation of youth as two separate messages are communicated. Like Israel, parents are still called to be the primary custodians of the faith (ibid: 97). The College Transition project conducted by Powell and her colleagues it was found that most parents do not talk to their children about faith, this includes Christian parents (2003: 117). Some Christian parents want to pass their faith on to their children but do not know how (Roehlkepartain in Yust, 2004: xi). Parents are often uncertain of their own faith development resulting in them being afraid to share their faith with their teenage children because they are aware that these youth yearn for interaction through questioning and critiquing what is taught to them (Maiko, 2007: 8). Their uncertainty does not make them less responsible for imitating their faith to their children. Families need to understand their own spirituality and nurture it in order to assist their children. This does not mean that all conversations between youth and their parents should evolve around issues about their faith. Parents could also take time to share how they are experiencing their faith and this includes the challenges they face or have faced and how they have dealt with these. There are parents who do not know how to nurture the faith of their children because it probably was not modelled in their own homes when they were growing up (ibid: 17). Families can prepare children for this life in Christ by telling biblical stories as relevant for their stories, celebrating

one's faith as life in abundance, talking to each other, discussing challenges and faithful service towards each other and others (Caldwell in Yust, et al, 2006:328).

Faith formation has been described above as an intentional and ongoing process. Families, not the church, must be seen as the backbone of spiritual and moral formation of their children (Strommen, 1998:177–178). Parents need to understand that faith formation takes place with their children and not for them (Roehlkepartain in Yust, 2004: xii).

### 3.3.2.2 The role of the faith community

Faith formation is the central task of the faith community (Ackerman, 2001: nl). Youth identity and faith formation take place within community because there is no faith that is not awakened and formed in the matrix of relationship, language, ritual, and symbol (Fowler, 1987:55). The absence of these youth from Christian churches is an issue that concerns all who work in ministry and religious or spiritual education with youth (Engebretson, 2004: 264). In his book; *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*; James Wilhoit (2008:13) expresses concern with the erosion of intentional faith formation in the church. He also expresses concern for the extinction of traditional faith formation practices.<sup>81</sup> The church needs to prioritize faith formation (transformation according to Willard) as the centre of what it does. Wilhoit believes that it requires a whole generation to revive this. One of the challenges of this endeavour would be addressing the form that faith formation has taken in our churches as youth (and adults) are not growing in their faith because the gospel is not placed as the primary influence behind ecclesial formational programs (Wilhoit (ibid:33)

Faith formation through Christian religious education<sup>82</sup> is the role of the church and is aimed at helping young people grow in their faith. This task involves making the gospel easily accessible to young people in way that addresses their spiritual needs alongside the human challenges they face (Groome, 1980:73). Teachings about faith should be taught and modelled as relational and applicable to how these youth view God which allows a process of meaning-making. Traditional African communities value the church as a form of extended family

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<sup>81</sup> These practices are referred to as modes earlier in this chapter: systematic Bible teaching, Bible memorization and reading, Sunday evening services, the importance of testimonies, missions and global Christianity, observing the Sabbath, sharing meals (potlucks) practicing hospitality, camps, pastoral visitation and intergenerational socialization (2008:13).

<sup>82</sup> Groome (1980:25) describes Christian religious education as a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally attends with them to the activity of God in our present, to the Story of the Christian faith community, and to the Vision of God's Kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us. Groome (ibid: 26) describes catechesis (oral instruction) as the main medium through which this education happens because this helps form the young Christian through theology and Scripture (see discussion on discipleship above).

(Healey & Sybertz, 1996: 105). These traditional communities value the importance of relationships. Everything that is done within the community is done for the enhancement of personal and communal relationships. Something as simple as a greeting is not taken for granted in these contexts as this is considered a sign of communal solidarity. The faith community acknowledges that young people are created in God's image and that their creation is perfectly good should be a guiding notion (Maiko, 2007:15). An example of the Christian modelling mentioned above could be learnt from the discipleship process learned from the 'mganga' (local doctor or witch doctor) from Sukuma cultural tradition (Healey & Sybertz, 1996:88-90). When a young person desires to become a 'mganga' they spend much time (one or two years) with this 'mganga' to the extent of committing their lives to this person until a lifestyle change is evident. The youth is given various tests by the 'mganga', is subjected to various challenges and even pays for this process. In return the 'mganga' teaches this youth all that they do and even encourages the youth along the way, realising that this process will be tough. The importance of this practice lies within it being a communal process in which there is most often more than one disciple involved. Passing on of traditional African values and cultural practices is prioritised in this community as should be the case within faith communities that prioritise youth faith formation.

Listening to God directly as a faith community moves the clergy from the role of expert and controller to that of facilitator and teacher (Ackerman, 2001:3). The church can assist its members through five stages of spiritual growth through teaching young people to prayer and also listen (stage one); assigning them with a sponsor or mentor or group (stage two); allowing them space to be alone (stage three); creating spaces where questions can be asked (stage four) and assigning them to be sponsors or mentors (stage five) (Ackerman, 2001:34). Youth are nurtured in their faith when being engaged in concrete and critical ways in mission and service in the faith community (Maiko, 2007: 8). It is in these faith communities that they see the value of service to produce fruitful lives. The faith of these young people needs to be cultivated alongside their involvement in Christian citizenship (ibid: 9). It is also important to teach them the importance of silence and reflection for hearing the voice of God in their lives. An environment of interaction, conversation, debate and listening about the Bible would help them as they seek to understand God's role and purpose for their lives. The church should acknowledge the importance of them being able to wrestle with their faith at this stage in their lives and should provide boundaries in which they could do this (Maiko, 2007: 31). Churches have not been including young people in its faith narratives. Engaging youth constructively through creating safe spaces for questioning and expressing

fears and doubts is of greater impact than setting up rules and structures. Young people are admonished to 'be quiet' or 'stay still' in attempts to silence their voices and diminish the effects of their presence. These views and forms of silence complicate and inhibit the exercise of youth agency. This silence could lead to youth feeling disconnected from the faith community (Hyde et al, 2010:97). Sadly, as part of their meaning making, many youth decide not to associate themselves with a church based on past experiences in these churches (Maiko, 2007:60).

Faith is nurtured by what congregations teach through its various ministries (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 77). An important part of growing in one's faith is fellowship with God's people, making meaning together through shared stories of the faith. Youth need to participate and share in this process. Youth group, rallies, seminars, prayer meetings and times of fasting are all avenues through which these stories can be shared. Powell, et al (2013: 72) note that efforts to offer relevant and contextual teaching to young people have also resulted in segregated churches in which the youth is separated from the broader fellowship. This has led to teachings which are irrelevant to the life experiences and convictions of these youth resulting in young people feeling unchallenged to mature in their faith. It then becomes an issue of how we challenge these youth to practice their faith (Maiko, 2007: 91). According to scholars (Powell, Griffith & Crawford) the term *ekklesia* describes the church as a living, active group of Christians of all ages who are called by God to live according to kingdom priorities. The research they conducted also found that youth involved in intergenerational worship were most likely to mature in their faith than those segregated from the church (ibid:74-75). The church can help families prepare their youth for a life in Christ by helping parents understand their own faith formation processes and the role it plays in the lives of their children. In this way, church and home become a partnership in nurturing the spiritual growth of these youth. This type of church ministry includes parents and does not negate their role. The importance of parents in the faith formation of youth is also often highly emphasized among growing evangelical and non-denominational churches today. All of these theologians, programs, and initiatives recognize that faith is not really taught but 'caught,' especially by speaking about faith and carrying out religious practices in the home. Programs for youth rarely include parents; and when they do, it is more to 'inform' parents about youth activities than to engage parents in meaningful conversations with their children about faith or service activities. As a result, we find that many parents within the church are neglecting to speak to their children about their moral and spiritual matters or about their beliefs and values; and they are not carrying out central religious practices that nurture faith with their

children in their homes. Some parents in two-parent families come from different religious traditions or have little or no religious upbringing, and either are unable to pass on the faith to their children or feel ill-equipped to do so (Bunge, 2008:348- 349). The research study also found that youth do not feel supported by the adults in their congregations (Powell. Et al, 2013: 77). Greater efforts in building relationships with youth in the faith community need to be made.

Youth also need to learn to live amidst the tensions of their faith community and not leave because of the life stage they are in. They need a third-person perspective in which the opinions, evaluations and expectations of others are also taken into consideration. These other voices into the young person's life can assist them in gaining their own (Fowler, 1987:69). Even young people who attend church regularly and are confessing Christians know very little about their faith traditions, and have difficulty perceiving or articulating the relation between faith and their daily lives.

Faith communities should serve as the safe spaces in which its' youth experiences the realities of being Christian. These realities include trials and also the blessings that Christians experience. Young people are searching for adults who are authentic in how they live their faith. Authenticity enables them to see other Christians in the good and tough times in their lives. The more faithful our communities are the more likely it is that younger members would develop and experience an authentic faith (Groome, 1980:122).

The youth transition project also found that many youth mentioned the legacy that authentic youth leaders had left in their lives (Powell, et al, 2013:47). Unfortunately, families and churches have outsourced the parental role in young people's lives to the youth leader without equipping them for task at hand (ibid: 116). Spiritual and scriptural ignorance is increasing among mainline Protestant young people in Africa because of the ignorance of its youth leaders (2007:60). Right action, right belief, and right heart relate to one another in shaping the life of any youth (Maiko, 2007:11). Youth leaders need to be equipped to guide young people in their faith formation. Better care needs also be taken when selecting its youth ministry leadership as these youth leaders are respected greatly by the youth (Powell, et al, 2013:140 & Maiko, 2007: 10). Youth leaders also have the responsibility of helping youth wrestle through their faith formation process by helping them align their faith with their daily lifestyles. Many youth attend youth gatherings because they want to see their youth leader and not necessarily their peers. (ibid: 139-140). Having a youth leader or adult in one's life that is

grounded in his or her own faith helps the young person grow spiritually (Maiko, 2007:31). Faith formation is not accomplished through policies and programs since many of these policies or programs are focused on the felt needs of youth and not their real needs. Felt needs are those needs that seem urgent to youth because of the societal and daily influences on their lives. An example of this would be having a boyfriend because this seems to be the norm around them. Real needs on the other hand, are those needs the spiritual and parental leaders in their lives know they need based on Scripture and personal experience. These are not needs that surface under pressure but needs requiring fulfilment if the youth is to grow in their faith. One such need could be having a spiritual mentor who would journey alongside this young person (Dean, et al, 2002).

Dallas Willard (in Wilhoit, 2008:9) notes the primary problem the post-modern church faces is leading its members into authentic and holistic (spiritual, moral and personal) Christlikeness. With this comes the ability to empower young people to maintain this lifestyle independently from the church. Willard (ibid: 11) adds that churches spend far more time developing mission statements than they do being and making disciples. Within the EBCOSA, Dr. Wilfred Matham (2002) completed his doctoral dissertation on TEAM's discipling ministry among the coloured people of Swaziland and South Africa. In reaction to the dominant role TEAM mission has played in this denomination, the research question Matham asks is 'To what extent has the discipling ministry of TEAM in Southern Africa produced disciples with a holistic perspective on the Christian mission?' Despite an established constitution, Matham's conclusion was that TEAM basically executed its own narrowed understanding of the task of making disciples (2002: iii) as Olsen failed to focus on the lordship of Christ over the whole being of a person. Consequently, missionaries did not incorporate all aspects of people's growth along with their faith journey.

Faith formation is part of God's ongoing work in this world. Formational efforts that are not intentional about focussing on God lends itself to the dangers of Gnosticism (Wilhoit, 2008: 36). Church leaders (pastors, mentors & parents) should not assume that because youth use the correct terminology and comply with all the traditional rules, they are being positively formed in their faith (Setran & Kiesling, 2013:33). External conformity can be masked to look as though these youth conform but they are actually seeking approval and recognition within the church. Leaders who are happy with external behaviour do not easily notice this masked compliance. Setran & Kiesling (2013: ibid) reference the conformity of the older son in the story of the prodigal son of the Bible as such conformity. He remained close to the Father yet

worshipped the throne in silence. It is the church's responsibility to assist young people in noticing and acknowledging specific personal idols that could distract them from fully worshipping God. The challenge is that Christian jargon (Christianese) and consistent church attendance has become part of their identity already. Explanation and discussion of the modes of faith formation and reasons thereof would serve helpful in this instance.

### 3.3.2.3 The role of culture and society

Faith formation of youth is not the sole responsibility of the church. This study is conducted within a South African context in which various cultures are present. Even though South Africa is a multiracial and multicultural country, many of its people adhere to a variety of African traditional cultures. The researcher prioritizes these to explain the impact that culture has on the faith formation of youth but is aware that there are many cultures active within this country and even within African traditional cultures itself. Maiko's (2007) book *Youth, Faith and Culture* places emphasis on the role of African traditional culture on the faith formation of youth. Maiko stresses the importance of the Bible being taught to youth from an African ethical and normative perspective. This, he believes, does not detract the Christian faith from important cultural practices necessary for young people to inherit. It is also important for consistent relationship between faith and moral development of youth as discussed earlier. Sociologist, Anthony Giddens (2001:533) agrees that the religious life of the young person is also a central aspect of social life. The symbols and rituals used are most often associated with something they connect to on a social level. He (ibid: 546) argues that church attendance is not the only variable to consider in the faith formation of these youth because the regularity of such attendance is not necessarily evidence of a deeply rooted faith. These youth may attend out of habit. Discussing the relationship between religion and morality, African theologian Mokgethi Motlhabi (2008:55) agrees that there is a fine line in the relationship between morality and religion but the distinction between the two should be maintained. It is within communities that young people will learn moral values and behaviours that will impact their faith and how they live out this faith. In this regard, African theologians, Benezet Buyo and Juvenal Muya (2008:96) discuss the importance of understanding people's cultural perceptions around faith before forcing them into a specific form of the Christian faith as passed on from missionary outreaches<sup>83</sup> (ibid: 266). This is based on the belief that African people already had their own understanding of who God is

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<sup>83</sup> The Accra confession established at the Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians in December 1977 calls for attention to an African based theology which is biblically based. This confession was reaction against the manner in which colonialism brought a White focussed gospel along with its cultures to the African people. This confession holds at its core an opposition to a white dominance of the gospel and church in Africa.

prior to hearing the gospel. Missionaries were convinced that Africans had no perception of who God is (Kiaziku, 2009: 11). These pre-understandings of faith and of God are most often tied to cultural values and backgrounds and should be taken seriously.

An important part of faith formation is helping young people discern between the tension between dominant societal culture and that of the faith community. Societal culture dominates these young minds because its messages and teaching is found wherever they go (billboards, social media, etc.). They try to remain loyal to participating in the rituals, practices and beliefs of the faith community but find themselves living out what society and family teaches them. Cross cultural studies teach that acculturation to different contexts is important in the process of youth identity and faith formation. Acculturation teaches them how to learn new stories, values, practices and rituals that agree with their faith as lifestyle (Yust, 2004:28-29). Like faith formation, learning to adopt a new culture as a way of life, is a life-long process. During this process youth could decide to choose to abandon their familial traditions and take on the ecclesial ones (assimilation); or they could juggle the two by living according to each when they are in them (separation); or they could decide that neither is relevant to their new lives by marginalizing both or they could choose to integrate those elements which they think are relevant to a Christ-like lifestyle with each other (ibid:30). The problem with acculturation of faith is that it requires that youth pass over from one culture to another without truly identifying which aspects of their own culture they abandon in the process (Kiaziku 2009: 48). Kiaziku argues that the gospel should be shared within cultural contexts and not as a separate culture. Integration, over time, should be encouraged as these youth grow in their faith. African scholars (Healey & Sybertz, 1996; Bujo & Muyo, 2008; Mothlabi, 2008; Kiaziku, 2009) stress the importance of the process of inculturation in order for the gospel message to be internalised amidst prevailing cultures. Youth in an African context require communities in which the gospel is internalised and practised. Inculturation seeks to integrate Christian faith with cultural life and world-views (Bujo & Muyo, 2008:191). Inculturation calls for discerning which cultural values disagree with a biblical Christian faith and which Christian practices align with cultural ones (Kiaziku, 2009: 19). This then means that Christian traditions should also be aligned with the biblical text and the essence of the gospel. These traditions should not be accepted only because they were passed down through church fathers but because they find relevance to the prevailing culture (ibid). Many young people experience tension between the faith being taught at missionary established churches and the cultural expectations of their families. They need the example of Christ-like adults in their lives. If this is not evident in their lives the option to abandon faith

through separation becomes more attractive (Yust, 2004: 39-40). Inculturation takes both the gospel message and the cultural contexts seriously. Faith formation processes that take inculturation seriously, reflects on faith, church structures, liturgy, role of ancestors and communities, and morals within the prevailing African culture of the youth in preparation for their faith formation process (Kiaziku, 2009: 84).

The assertion that faith formation is the sole responsibility of the faith communities reinforces the problematic notion that different institutions (churches, mission organisations, schools) have exclusive responsibility for different parts of young people's development. If a wide range of youth development organizations decides to become more intentional about including spiritual development as part of their mandate, it may open a dialogue across sectors that re-invigorates commitments to holistic development (Pittman, et al, 2008:37). Faith formation is part of everyday life and should not be isolated to one context of life but takes place in daily lifestyle events of youth (Wilhoit, 2008:38). Youth are also shaped by their peers, neighborhoods, schools, religious communities, and wider political and social contexts. (Bunge, 2008:350). Each of these contexts transfer worldviews different to their familial or spiritual ones and each speak into the lives of these youth (Groome, 1980:123 - 124).

The socio-cultural context in which young people grow up in influence their faith formation greatly because faith formation happens through these daily societal interactions (Groome,1980: 107). The social community plays a big role in helping young people achieve identity and personality as well as developing faith (Maiko, 2007:166). Groome (1980:110) describes identity as the continuous and stable awareness we have of our self-image, worldview and value system. Faith as a lived reality has to interact with the society by which the faith of these young people are formed. Positive societal nurture for youth is holistic and provided by its family, learning institutions, church or other social environments (Maiko, 2007: 12). True spiritual growth cannot happen without sincere introspection of one's need for God. This admission of one's need for God goes beyond what culture dictates to its youth. Faith formation among youth helps them realize their need for God but also helps them weigh up the costs involved (Setran & Kiesling, 2004: 37).

Chapter one mentioned that the researcher would make a choice for what faith formation is understood as within the context of this study, after the empirical context being studied (chapter two) and also the theory related to faith formation has been discussed. Faith

as a process toward spiritual growth has been conceptualised as most appropriate to the purpose and context of this research study. This is discussed in the section that follows.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The concepts faith, spiritual, discipleship, spiritual growth (and maturity) and faith formation have been discussed in an effort to clarify the broader theories concerning faith formation of youth. These concepts have been discussed by considering the developmental theories relevant to fourteen to seventeen years old youth that would assist the researcher and the different role players in the youth's life to understand which factors affect the faith formation of these youth.

Christian spirituality has been understood as synonymous with the Christian faith in which faith enables a sense of spirituality which is expected to mature. The terms faith and spiritual have been understood as interdependent in most evangelical theological research. Scholars have likewise used the terms discipleship, faith or spiritual formation and spiritual growth or maturity referring the same phenomenon. The researcher has noted where these have differed. A deepened understanding of spirituality calls for a critical evaluation of how youth are perceived (anthropology); what the process to spiritual growth looks like; the rituals and practices (modes) that nurture ethical and Christ-like decision making and also which of these practices become obligatory crucial to the Christian young person.

Without considering human developmental stages, theology runs the risk of not practically impacting the lives of youth (Maiko, 2007:8). An interdisciplinary definition of spirituality positions it as an intrinsic part of being human related to but not defined by the religion one adheres to (in terms of the need to be connected). This spirituality should be nurtured within and outside of one's religious community as growth and change should affect the whole being. An interdisciplinary definition of spirituality also emphasizes spirituality as embedded in relationships and community and not merely as an individualistic endeavour.

One's faith influences one's ethical behaviour and vice versa. This is why helping youth grasp a full understanding of who they are in Christ and how they can live their lives in the context of many opposing worldviews and challenges (morally) was deemed important for this chapter. Intentional nurture should include intentional decision making from the youth themselves. It is also important to reflect on who takes responsibility for this spiritual nurture

and at what point the youth takes on this role. A spirituality that encompasses the whole being should also reflect on the role society and culture play in influencing young people (Yust, et al, 2006: 10).

According to Crabb (2002:27) Christians should find their identity in Christ and not in activities. It seems as though more emphasis should be placed on instilling Christian virtues than on spiritual practices. The assumption is that virtues like integrity and self-control would enhance the moral lifestyles of young people which would in turn affect the decisions they make about their faith. Crabb (2002:59) believes that there are too many Christians with low self-images depressed at not reaching the mark because of trying to keep up with practices rather than relationship. Biblical principles are reduced to the basic principles of the world when they're followed in order to gain the better life we demand.

The aim of this chapter thus far has been to discuss the terms, theories (and critiques thereof), modes and influential factors involved when investigating the faith formation of youth between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years old. Faith has been described as knowledge, relational, internalised belief, a personal experience based on a commitment of mind will and emotions and as a process of inquiry and transformation through justification, sanctification and vocation (Migliore, Maiko, Fowler, Strommen & Hardel). It has also been described as a mystery in which questions related to trials and suffering may never be answered (DeGruchy 2013 & Powell, et al, 2013). As a spiritual process influenced by familial, ecclesial, cultural and societal relationships, faith includes understanding biblical truth and being accountable to the other in these relationships.

The term faith development has mainly been associated with James Fowler's stage theory of faith development. This theory relies on identity development theory of Erikson and Marcia, moral development theory of Kohlberg and cognitive development theory of Piaget. Discipleship has been surmised as a life-long process of helping young people discover and strengthen their trust and faith in Jesus Christ. It is about helping them learn to trust God by creating spaces in which they can explore their relationship with Him (Powell, et al, 2013:34-35). Spiritual growth has been associated with the ability to measure to the full stature of Christ. Youth need to experience God in the different relationships and contexts they find themselves in order for this process of growth to be fruitful. Fowler also sees faith as a process but the aim is on personal meaning making, not spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is a mind-set and lifestyle shift towards what Christ considers priority in one's life. The aim of

spiritual growth is maturity but this is based on the realization that such maturity cannot be measured. Spiritual maturity however can be evidenced in one's identity, morality and faith as a young person. The faith community, one's parents, peers, culture and society and the modes described above are crucial to this process as the joint goal of each of these should be spiritual maturity. Faith as a process towards spiritual growth includes a deepened understanding of faith to ensure the fruitful faith formation of the fourteen to seventeen years old youth.

The researcher's summation of faith as a process incorporates the various modes, developmental theories and influential relationships mentioned in this chapter. Faith formation is a gradual life-long process which is not necessarily developmental. Youth are encouraged to be intentional about their faith formational process because they are capable of taking personal responsibility at this stage in their lives. The modes of faith formation are chosen and taught holistically. Familial (parent/child) and ecclesial (youth leader, spiritual director, family, youth) relationships can either enhance or hinder the faith formation of young people. The EBCOSA uses the term spiritual growth to refer to what academics term faith formation.

This chapter has discussed the findings from a theoretical investigation on faith formation. Key terms relevant to faith formation (in an attempt to find a working definition of faith and spiritual) have been explored but not exhausted as each of these are considered foundational theological concepts with dynamic meanings dependant on the disciplines and contexts in which they have been used. Discipleship, spiritual growth and maturity and faith formation have been discussed as these are relevant to understanding how faith formation is understood by theologians, sociologists and psychologists. Key developmental theories and also influential factors relevant to understanding faith from the perspective of 14-17 year old youth have been discussed. Finally, a choice of the term spiritual growth has been found most relevant to the EBCOSA. An understanding of faith as a process toward spiritual growth has been recommended.

Chapter four continues to explore the descriptive- empirical task by asking what is going on (in the EBCOSA) through an empirical study. It begins with the key concepts opted for from chapter three. The research design and methodology used in this dissertation are elaborated on here. This chapter explains how the research sample was chosen, how data was collected and also why these tools were chosen. The process involved in getting ethical clearance for this study is explained. The data analysis plan used is also explained. This chapter concludes by sharing the limitations and gaps found during the data analysis process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EMPIRICAL STUDY CONDUCTED WITHIN THE EVANGELICAL BIBLE CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

#### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter one described the purpose of this research study as an effort to explore what factors hinder and enhance the faith formation of youth between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years old. Consideration of whether faith formation is deemed important to these youth and their congregational leadership was given in efforts to partner with these youth concerning their faith formation (empirical study). The second research objective; of conducting an empirical study through the use of interviews and focus groups with the youth and its leadership within the EBCOSA is elaborated in here. The participants used in this dissertation are fourteen to seventeen years old youth; their youth leaders and pastors within the EBCOSA.

This chapter jointly addresses the descriptive-empirical and interpretive tasks of practical theological interpretation. The process of gathering information about the EBCOSA is continued through discussing the process followed during the empirical study. This empirical research process is understood as a disciplined way of attending to the needs of the youth, their families and the faith community through a process of describing, observing and interviewing (Osmer, 2008: 39). The qualitative methods employed assist the researcher in not objectifying the congregants. The research findings of this study are discussed through reflecting on the theoretical perspectives discussed in chapters two and three. The process of interpreting why the EBCOSA's youth ministry looks the way it does is thus continued through the voices of its members (and adherents).

Chapter two (descriptive question; what is going on in the EBCOSA) elaborates on the research context in which the research problem was birthed and as such adds value to understanding the past and present state of youth ministry in the EBCOSA (the first section of findings). Chapter three (interpretive question; why this is happening in the EBCOSA) was a

theoretical investigation into faith formation in which faith development theory was found important when discussing the fourteen to seventeen year old young person. One of the reasons why the empirical study has focussed on faith development theory has been its contribution to theological anthropology because of the natural capacity for a faith relationship with God and this capacity can be corrupted or misdirected. It was also noted that data relevant to this theme is limited within the EBCOSA. The theoretical perspectives on faith formation explored in chapter three were employed to analyse the appropriateness of the EBCOSA's theological framework with regards to this concept. The theories chosen were found relevant to the faith formation of youth and also as applicable to the EBCOSA (Osmer, 2008: 91). These have been found useful in developing an understanding of faith applicable to the context of this study and as relevant to formational strategies suggested later. Faith development theory is not the focus of this dissertation but is an integral aspect of understanding faith formation processes among youth. It was noted earlier that this theory is however an important discussion partner of how young people grow in their faith. The empirical study focussed on faith development as relevant to understanding faith formation in fourteen to seventeen year old youth. Terms used in the EBCOSA theological framework (spiritual growth, spiritual maturity and discipleship) were included here to ascertain how the youth and its leadership understood faith development within the broader context of faith formation.

## 4.2 Reflection on the research problem and question

### 4.2.1 The research problem

The types of ministries (to youth) churches have often reflect how they think about youth. How the needs of youth are included or excluded reflects the church's history and cultural bias towards them (Strommen & Hardel, 2000:77). Chapters one and two noted that the EBCOSA has not placed emphasis on youth ministry because this was not the focal point of missionary outreach when starting this denomination. It was also noted that the research conducted by Dr. Matham (2002: iii) on discipleship within this denomination concluded that TEAM executed its own narrowed understanding of the task of making disciples. By narrowed understanding Matham argued that missionaries evangelized the locals but did not offer a holistic discipleship process to these new converts. By holistic he argued that social and secular aspects to the Christian faith were not given attention in how people were disciplined.

Chapters one and two discussed how TEAM used education as a ministry tool to youth. Some of the missionaries (Dawson, Genheimers) used this medium to share the gospel with youth, whilst others (Olsen, Saxe) used it as a means to evangelizing their parents. This later developed into formal ministry programs offered to these youth (Bible Clubs, camps, etc.). The challenge however has been that the same discipleship model contested in Matham's dissertation was used among the youth. Youth became Christians but were not holistically discipled. The faith formation (Fowler, 1996) of these youth is not taken seriously in the ministries the church offers to them. How young people experience faith and a relationship with God needs to be taken seriously if these youth are expected to have a lasting faith (sticky faith according to Powell, et al, 2001). As noted in chapter one, God is emotionally associated with how they experience relationships.

Chapter two described the EBCOSA as a family growth church in which relational and biological bonds between members are difficult to sever. Despite these close bonds, the challenge of older members (lay members, leaders and families) not being involved and concerned for the lives of the youth remains. Youth are not placed as priority in preaching sermons, evangelism or discipleship. Youth are also not given opportunity to exercise the gifts and talents they have within the church (on a consistent basis) context because they are said to be 'the church of tomorrow'. Some youth have no consistent spiritual example to follow whilst others are not sure what biblical truth really is as they do not see this in the lives of their parents. Youth leaders are under pressure to be the main form of spiritual guidance and are accused of clashing with what parents are expecting from the youth (Powell, et al, 2001). An empirical research study on what faith formation is and how it is reflected in the life of this age group seemed most adequate in addressing this challenge.

#### 4.2.2 The research question

In light of the above-mentioned empirical problem, the following question was investigated: What, if any, factors hinder and enhance the faith development of young people within the EBCOSA? Secondary questions included: What is meant by faith formation as related to fourteen to seventeen year old youth? How can ecclesial, familial and societal relationships enhance or hinder this development as part of the faith formation process?

### 4.3 Reflection on the research process

The unit of analysis used in this study was the fourteen to seventeen years old youth and their immediate leadership of the EBCOSA. This denomination has thirty-seven operative congregations of which thirty-three are in South Africa. These are further divided into: seven congregations in Kwa-Zulu Natal, four in the Eastern Cape, one in Kimberley, twelve in Gauteng and nine in the Western Cape. Chapter two described members of these congregations as predominantly 'coloured' in race. It also noted these people were impacted by the disparities in education that resulted from the apartheid era. All the youth interviewed for this study do have access to, and attend school.<sup>84</sup> Chapter two also noted the types of families that are most characteristic in coloured communities in South Africa. The youth interviewed are not all from two-parent nuclear families. Some live with a single parent, others with grandparents and in one congregation all the youth interviewed lived with a legal guardian as they were from an orphanage from which the church operates. Chapter three noted that the influence family has on the faith formation of youth is crucial to understanding these youth.

Chapter two also noted that a lack of full-time pastors in this denomination can be attributed to the heritage of foreign financial dependence resulting in few full-time pastors. All the pastors interviewed in this study are employed on a full-time basis. Youth leaders function on a volunteer basis. One of the youth leaders interviewed was a student at a South African university, another was unemployed, another (two) employed full-time at secular institutions and the others were the same full-time pastors. None of these leaders are remunerated for youth ministry (including the pastors as this is additional to their job descriptions). Chapter two described the theological orientation of this denomination as dispensational and fundamentalist evangelical.

A young person between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years old is at the point in their lives where they are making long-lasting decisions that will influence their identity. One of the main decisions to be made at this stage of life is about the existence of God and the

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<sup>84</sup> In South Africa, the low quality of tuition in schools in poor areas is one of the main factors constraining intergenerational socio-economic mobility. Residents of poor and predominantly black and coloured neighbourhoods will frequently attend schools with a lack of discipline and few highly qualified and experienced teachers...Not only are children of poor parents living in poor neighbourhoods likely to get less out of school, they are also more likely to leave school at an earlier age (Burger & Van der Watt in Swart, et al. 2010: 394-395).

quality of a relationship with Him. They are at the age when they can own their faith. A common trend (through observation) in the EBCOSA has been that as soon as young people become eighteen years old or start working or going to University, they leave the denomination. One of the reasons why this specific age group was chosen was to discover what is happening in the lives of these youth before eighteen years old, how they and their leadership understand their faith and also to find out what the denomination (church) teaches and has put in place at this stage that may cause these youth to leave.

Purposeful and theoretical sampling has been used in selecting the unit of analysis for this study. Purposeful sampling provides a clear criterion for the selection of participants needed to address the research question. Theoretical sampling stops when the researcher decides the study has reached saturation through analysing data as it is collected. (Ezzy, 2002: 74-75). First level coding in thematic analysis and the importance of writing down initial researcher ideas enable this process. Purposeful sampling resulted in the case being chosen because it contains many elements of faith development factors that interested the researcher (Silverman, 2001:250). The selection criterion for the unit of analysis used was twofold. Ten congregations from the EBCOSA population were selected by the researcher and the specific participants from these ten congregations were selected by its leadership. The total population is too large to include in this study. In this instance a clustered sampling unit was chosen. Stratification was used to select the youth needed for this study. Through two strata (age and gender), youth were classified according to specific elements necessary for the success of this study (Dooley, 1995: 134). A stratum could only be used effectively if an enumeration list of all the youth with the required criteria in the congregation was used. A balance between knowledge of the population (feasibility) and understanding the reason for the study (purpose) was also necessary to make the selection (ibid). It is for these reasons that the pastors and youth leaders were requested to select the youth (whom they know and work with) out of their congregations. These leaders were given a letter stipulating the aim and purpose of this study (addendum G). Convenient sampling; in which participants are selected according to availing themselves but not necessarily meeting the criteria was intentionally avoided (ibid: 135). The researcher requested that the selected congregational boards or pastors decide who the youth or possible church leader would be based on the following criterion: Youth had to be between fourteen to seventeen years old. At least one of the three youth in each instance (interview or focus group) was of the opposite gender. For example, if two boys were selected the other must be a girl or vice versa. If there was no youth leader but a youth committee, one member of that committee could be selected or otherwise a church

leader. This is in accordance with the congregational governance structure of the EBCOSA as mentioned in chapter two. The church board functions alongside the pastor. Clustering was used to select the number of congregations used in this study. A cluster is a group of elements within a larger sample (Dooley, 1995:134). In this instance, the unit of analysis had to be divided into regional clusters in which each congregation from the cluster included youth needed for this study. Choosing a clustered sampling unit saved the researcher travelling and time (since she did not have to visit each individual congregation within the denomination) but she was still able to get the desired criterion of youth and leadership required. The excel document stipulating a list of all the churches and youth ministries<sup>85</sup> sent by the secretary of the National Council was used as the main guide for choosing congregations (the cluster). The method of probability proportionate to size was used through choosing the number of participants per cluster in proportion to the size of that cluster (Dooley, 1995:135). The amount of congregations chosen per region were: two in Kwa-Zulu Natal, one in Eastern Cape, four in Gauteng and three in Western Cape.

The researcher tried to attain the largest possible sample size within the constraints of the research design (ethnographic case study) and also the researcher's resources (budget and manpower) (Dooley, 1995:139). An email (appendix I) was sent out to all pastors or elders as indicated on the list explaining what the study entailed and asking whether their churches had active<sup>86</sup> youth ministries. This email also asked if they were willing to allow the researcher access to the congregation. The letter sent to the National Council (which was included as part of the ethical clearance process requesting permission to conduct the study) was also attached to this email to serve as justification that the denomination has been consulted with. Only three pastors replied to the email after which a telephonic call was made to clarify the process and also possible dates. Thereafter all the pastors of the congregations with active youth ministries on the list received were telephonically contacted. A third set of phone calls were made to random<sup>87</sup> pastors to ascertain which churches had a youth ministry, or young people of the appropriate age in the church and also to clarify whether it was possible to conduct the

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<sup>85</sup> This list is referred to as enumeration of all the elements (possible participants) in the population. It is important to begin the selection process with as full a list as possible. In this case, the full list of EBCOSA congregations was used (Dooley, 1995: 133).

<sup>86</sup> The word active is used in this dissertation to indicate those congregations in which youth ministry is taking part in or ministerial activities or functioning in its ministerial role within the congregation and also its social context.

<sup>87</sup> By random the researcher here refers to the process by which the local congregational leadership selected the youth involved in this study. These leaders were given the responsibility of selecting these youth from their congregations. The researcher's understanding is that these were selected according to availability and not preference from these leaders.

research there. All churches with youth ministries were color coded green on the list; those with young people but no youth ministry brown; those with no young people, purple; those with no youth ministry, blue and those with no pastor in red. The congregations that were not in South Africa and also the Bible College were color coded yellow (see attached in addendum E).

Most (23 out of 33) local congregational youth ministry in this denomination has been discontinued. The reasons given by pastors (telephonically when sourcing congregations) were that they do not have sufficient 'man-power', even though there were young people in that congregation. Some indicated that there were no young people in the church. Due to the researcher being unable to access all the congregations with an active youth ministry (10); five of these congregations were chosen because they currently have an active youth ministry and the other five were chosen because they have youth attending church activities but no active youth ministry. Another challenge faced was that the contact details for some pastors as well as the congregations noted having an active youth ministry were incorrect as stipulated on the list. Positively; all the pastors contacted (who fitted the criterion) were willing to have their congregations as part of this study and they were also willing to assist me in arranging all the logistics (young people, venues, times) for the dates scheduled for them. Pastors in Durban and Port Elizabeth also provided accommodation for the researcher (and in the case of Port Elizabeth, her family as well). The final names were selected according to a random sample.<sup>88</sup> This means that all the names of the congregations who have reported having an active youth ministry were placed in a bowl of which the first 5 were chosen. The same was done with those not having an active youth ministry (assuming there were more). If they were five or less all those were included in the sample and the difference would incorporate the active youth ministry group. In the case where there was no active Youth leader, the church board member was interviewed.

Consent (and accent) forms were given to each participant and also each parent or guardian of the youth. Each participant chosen had the right to decline as this was voluntary. No payment was promised to participants. Participants were assured that no costs would be incurred by any participant as the researcher would travel to each respective congregation. All the local congregational logistics were arranged by the pastors in correspondence with the researcher.

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<sup>88</sup> Random sampling assists the researcher in achieving non-bias probability sampling. Names are thrown into a hat or box and randomly drawn giving each possible participant an equal chance of participating in the study (Dooley, 1995: 134-135).

Interviews were conducted with three youth, one pastor and one youth or church leader per congregation, resulting in five people being individually interviewed per congregation. Focus group interviews were conducted with the two leaders and another three youth (to allow involvement of more youth). At the end of the empirical study; forty-three interviews were conducted (of which 7 were focus groups) nationally<sup>89</sup>. A high completion rate<sup>90</sup> for this research study was reached. Three interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and the rest in English. The average age of all the youth leaders was 35 years old. The average age of all the pastors (and one elder) was 43 years old. Three of the youth were black and the rest were colored males and females. The average length of individual interviews with youth was 35 minutes and 50 minutes with the leadership. The average length of focus group interviews was 50 minutes. Twenty percent of the youth interviewed were adherents of the EBCOSA, with eighty percent being members. All leaders (excluding one) interviewed were members. The average length of time leaders have been members was twenty years. This is important because of the priority that this denomination places on its history (inclusive of its youth ministry) and also because it is governed by a congregational and presbytery system (chapter two). This then means that members should have a voice in how the church is governed.

#### 4.3.1 Data analysis process

Thematic analysis was used as the method of analysis used for this study. This method identifies and reports patterns (themes) within data in an attempt to interpret various aspects of the research question (Braun & Clark, 2006:79 & Ezzy, 2002:88). This form of analysis has been used alongside different types of research methodologies and is considered one of the simplest forms of analysis that can be used by developing researchers. It is a method of analysis used for reporting the experiences, meanings and realities of participants and also for acknowledging the ways in which meaning is made within participants' social contexts (Braun & Clark, 2006:81). It is considered most valuable in contexts (like the EBCOSA) where new theories and interpretations are required (Ezzy, 2002:85). It is also not restricted to

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<sup>89</sup> The principle of confident interval of sample teaches that a standard deviation in the sample (in terms of size) does not necessarily impact the value of the data to the study because each interview and focus group conducted tells the researcher something important about the entire sample (Dooley, 1995:137). In other words, confidence in this findings of this research study cannot be lost because the exact sample projected (10 congregations) was not used.

<sup>90</sup> Completion rate refers to the extent to which a sample is successfully reached and in which participants cooperate. A low completion rate raises concerns as to how much nonbiased effort was made to reach all possible participants in this study. Part of this effort was making additional calls to pastors after a low response rate of emails was reached. Use of face-to-face interviews as opposed to telephonic interviews also assisted in achieving this high completion rate (Dooley, 1995: 139-140).

one specific theoretical framework which makes it quite attractive in a practical theological study. The specific phases implemented in this method are discussed in detail below. What proceeds is a description and summary of the main results derived from the thematic map (during the coding process), a detailed analysis in terms of the main categories surmised from the empirical process.

#### 4.3.1.1 Plan for data analysis

Using thematic analysis is flexible in that the researcher could either gain a rich description of the entire data set or give a more detailed account of one particular theme or group of themes (Silverman, 2006:83). It makes use of interview transcriptions as a reliable record of naturally occurring interaction (Silverman, 2001:13). Each interview is transcribed from the recorded tape. Words and sentences that relate the topic of the research is underlined. These words and sentences are sorted into categories and themes that will be identified (Rossouw, 2003:147). It comprises of six phases of analysis (described below). These phases cannot be implemented without all the relevant data being transcribed (Braun & Clark, 2006:86-94).

#### 4.3.1.2 Familiarize yourself with the data

During phase one; the researcher familiarized herself with the data. All prior knowledge of the data was noted in the field notes accumulated throughout the empirical process. This was not problematic because the researcher personally conducted the interviews and focus groups and is also naturally prone towards note keeping. The patterns or themes consistent in the focus groups were also noted, hence the change in the type of focus group interview conducted. The entire data set (theory, questionnaires, tapes and transcriptions) was read and re-read during this phase.

One of the ways to ensure that the interview process runs smoothly is to conduct a pilot study. During a pilot study, the research questions are tested with a small group of the total sample frame to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved (Dooley, 1995:204). The appropriateness (language) and manner in which questions are posed is also tested. All interviews were conducted by the researcher. The pilot study alerted the researcher to possible problems for the projected empirical process. The researcher realized that the manner in

which she phrased the questions posed in interviews could have been clearer: Quite a few colloquial terms were used in an effort to connect with the youth but this was not as helpful as suspected. Some questions were rephrased (question 9) whilst others were added (questions 3, 14, 15 & 16). The last page of the questionnaire was also adapted (see addendum I). The procedure for conducting focus groups was changed after the pilot study (see addendum J). The researcher initially began conducting focus groups as structured through the use of an information leaflet (Addendum K) on the EBCOSA and pre-planned questions thereafter. This approach was projected because the focus groups were meant to be conducted with the pastor, youth leader and three young people (five per group) that were not individually interviewed. This did not work as planned because at most congregations the youth interviewed were also the youth included in the focus group resulting in questions being repetitive. A semi structured focus group was followed thereafter using the key problematic topics (peer pressure, teenage pregnancy and inauthentic Christian adults) arising from individual interviews as the focus of the group discussion. This worked much better. The pilot study conducted in this study assisted the researcher in familiarising herself with the data. The extract from the researcher's field notes below would enable some clarity regarding this challenge:

Pilot study - arrived at the congregation at 8:00am to find all the young people with the youth leader & pastor present. This was really an encouragement to me. I explained all the consent forms to the whole group which saved time during the actual interviews. Interviews went well but I was uncertain of the recorders (my cell phones and a video recorder) being used. I took it for granted that I would easily access a good recorder at the university but this was unsuccessful. Construction work at the church distorted one interview and I would need to rely on the notes taken in this case. The focus group did not work well. Sharing information learnt thus far (on the EBCOSA's understanding of faith development) seemed to silence people's opinions. Youth were not comfortable. I'm not sure whether this was due to fear of the leadership present or the context. I decided that the format would need to change. The format of one question in the interview would need to be changed and two other questions were added. A more informal approach would be adapted to the focus group. I would also have to get improved recording tools before the next congregation.

Feedback after pilot - I decided to have a discussion with a colleague in my department and also at the department for research development. I shared my experience thus far and also requested advice on the approach further. Both recommended that I read about focus groups and also that I note my experience and the changes I needed to make as growth points. I decided that I would no longer use my cell phone but located a digital recorder and also an iPad for recordings of the next session. I would also make sure the venue used is suitable prior to the next session.

The research design, methodology, method of analysis and also the tools used and its connection to the practical theological theoretical framework used (Osmer) were verified during this phase. This was also when codes noted during the interviews were reflected on.

#### 4.3.1.3 Generate initial codes

During phase two, the researcher decided how initial codes would be formulated. The choice for coding manually and not using a computer assisted program was made here after reviewing literature on both approaches. Peer debriefing<sup>91</sup> (Ezzy, 2002:66 & Dooley, 1995:205) has been used throughout the process of this empirical study to avoid any possible biases from the researcher. One peer (a colleague in the same discipline) has been consulted during phase one and two (coding) of the data analysis process. Two other peers (Honours psychology students) assisted the researcher in phase three (searching for themes) of the analysis process. Two of these peers have no connection to the EBCOSA and have no personal research interest in this study. One is a member of the EBCOSA. Involving these outsiders has given the researcher an opportunity to test themes and possible theories, become more aware of personal values connected to the study and also discuss problems with the methodology. Sociologist, Douglas Ezzy (2002:67), a sociologist, notes that responses of others to our interpretations are a central part of the process of developing a trustworthy account. Inductive thematic analysis was used during the initial coding process. The themes or patterns are linked to the data itself and may bear little relation to the specific questions of the researcher (Braun and Clark, 2002:83).

Coding was conducted manually through using thematic analysis procedures. This was done with the assistance of peer debriefing (mentioned above) and a second researcher. A tabular system assisted the researcher to place initial codes into a column alongside the transcribed extract. Second level coding was directed towards the specific research question

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<sup>91</sup> Peer debriefing is the process of exposing oneself to a peer who is detached from the research study that the researcher can discuss and can be critiqued by with the aim of exploring aspects of the study that would otherwise remain implicit in the researcher's mind. It should be conducted at different points during the study to prevent any bias from the researcher who is closely attached to the study. Douglas Ezzy notes three benefits of peer debriefing as: a greater awareness of the influence of the researcher's personal values and theoretical orientations (legally and ethically); gives the researcher an opportunity to test and explore theories and how these are interpreted with a peer in the same discipline and it also allows discussion of the challenges faced with the research methodology used. Peer debriefing is a conscious effort of the researcher to provide a trustworthy research study (Ezzy, 2002: 66-69).

posed in this study; what, if any, factors hinder and enhance the faith development of fourteen to seventeen years old youth by using semantic themes in which the researcher reflects solely on what participants have said. The data was thereafter organized to show patterns in semantic content, summarised and interpreted through an attempt to theorize the significance of patterns and their broader meanings and implications. Codes (according data extracts from second column) were then sorted into themes by drawing mind-maps with the theme in the centre and placing the extracts gathered at the tips thereof. What counted as a theme was determined by how this theme addressed the research question. Extracts that were similar were coloured coded and formed clusters (subheadings) under the theme. The researcher reviewed the themes by listing all colour codes along with its themes on a separate sheet of paper along with the names chosen jointly by the three researchers (peers). These names (as with the codes) were formulated with the research question in mind. Each theme was reviewed by also looking at whether the extracts attached to these were relevant to the names given. The names were verified by asking what aspect of the data each theme captured without having to paraphrase extracts. It is in this phase that a detailed analysis of each theme in the form of a story answering the research question was written out. This was done through first writing two or three sentences that connected the theme to the research question.

Names that are concise and immediately identify what it says to the reader were chosen. This process was summarised into a thematic map which assisted in writing the summary (report) below. Verbatim responses relating to identified themes were selected as illustrations to be used in this chapter. There was significant variation in the quality of the data from each of the three types of participants in the study, with the majority of data coming from pastors and youth leaders rather than the youth. However, to facilitate a comparison of the relational processes between leader-youth pairs and synthesis of a large amount of data, the themes identified in youth, youth leaders and pastors or elders were collapsed. Transcription data from all three categories were thus merged into the categories below.<sup>92</sup> The relative balance of youth and leadership data that contributed to each theme is noted so that this can be taken into account. One of the highlights of this process has been the amazement felt when noticing that most responses from youth and leadership were the same.

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<sup>92</sup> The researcher is aware that the outcome could have been different has she maintained these three distinct categories. The research question however, required what the churches response to these challenges could be. As such, joint findings served best.

The following table represents the codes were used in this study:

Code <sup>93</sup>	Reference
Int. 1, Cong 3	Interview 1 in Congregation 3
Int. 1, Cong. 6, P.1	Interview 1 in Congregation 6, Pastor’s voice 1
Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1	Interview 4 in Congregation 2, youth leader’s voice 1
Int. 2, Cong. 7, R 1	Interview 2 in Congregation 7, Respondent (referring to a young person) voice 1
Fg. 1 Cong. 2	Focus group 1 in Congregation 2
Fg. 1 Cong. 2, R. 1	Focus group 1 in congregation 2, respondent 1
Fg. 1, Cong. 2, Pastor	Focus group 1 in congregation 2, Pastor

Table 1

First level coding was done with the assistance of a second researcher (as noted earlier) by making tables (with three columns), in which the actual responses (transcribed data) was placed in column one and the key responses (phrases) given by participants were recorded in the second column. Figure 1 below illustrates this concept:

Transcription Coding – Congregation 3

Transcription	First level coding	Theme
<p>Int. 1 Cong 3</p> <p>R1: every week</p> <p>I: Every week. My next question is do you attend every week cos you actually wanna be here? Or because you are forced to be?</p> <p>R1: Actually because I want to be here.</p> <p>I: ok so nobody’s forcing you?</p> <p>R1: No my parents don’t have to get me out of bed. I guess it’s just a matter of being self- motivated. They don’t have to tell me oh its church (name) get out of bed. So I</p>	<p>I want to be here.</p>	

<sup>93</sup> Numerical references to codes differ in the text. The author used these as an explanation of general codes used but has not included each individual code listed in the text.

<p>just come to church.</p> <p>I: Oh, that's important. Do you attend any of these? Maybe none of these? Youth group?</p> <p>R1: ya, we have a youth group. We started a youth group.</p> <p>I: Prayer meetings?</p> <p>R1 : yes, Wednesday</p> <p>I: ok. Bible study?</p> <p>R1: Hmmm our Bible study is included with our youth group, so</p> <p>I: Ok. Any other Christian activities?</p> <p>R1: Hmm I'm part of the worship team.</p> <p>I: Oh ok. I know you used to dance ne?</p> <p>R1: ya, we used to do dancing.</p> <p>I: Ok let's carry on. What would you say is your understanding of being a Christian? How do you see being a Christian?</p> <p>R1: Hmmm a Christian basically is someone that finally comes to a point and he realizes that we are here by grace and he finally accords God with that acknowledgement that we are here because of him and hmmm, like the book I read the Purpose Driven life</p>	<p>youth group</p> <p>Prayer meetings</p> <p>Bible study</p> <p>we are here by grace</p>	
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<p>by Rick Warren, basically sums up everything we need to know as Christians. Why we are here and our personal ambitions is not important. What we do for God is more important. Living for Him and worshipping him. It doesn't matter what we want out of life because without him we can do nothing. So ya, that was a great book that I read.</p> <p>I: Shoo, ya it definitely well it kinda gives you focus as a Christian.</p> <p>R1: Ya, a lot. It really ...hmm I mean when I was newly saved we did the study of assurances like the assurance of prayer and forgiveness but I didn't really there was lots of questions that was unanswered and like for a Christian I was still young. I had a lots of questions that I still wanted to be answered but I didn't really get a chance to ask to you know ask people because I was afraid of what they going to think look at this silly girl asking me these silly questions but you know its questions I really wanted to be answered. And when I picked up the book Rick Warren, the purpose driven life that really just focused me and told me why am I placed on this earth and you know God should really be the focus of everything you do.</p>	<p>What we do for God is more important</p> <p>doesn't matter what we want out of life because without him we can do nothing.</p> <p>lots of questions that was unanswered</p> <p>didn't really get a chance to ask</p> <p>afraid of what they going to think</p> <p>God should really be the focus of everything you do.</p>	
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The researcher's initial ideas about the second level coded extracts (actual responses) after this process (completing all transcript data) are noted below:

I am surprised at:

- How the youth have learnt traditions in the ways they are speaking.
- That many (all) of the pastors spoke to what my underlying assumptions were.
- At the few spiritually mature youth.
- Youth leaders not being saved for that long yet thrown into leadership.
- So many pastors are doing youth.
- Everyone being so accommodating and welcoming.

The choice for semantic themes was also made during this phase. Theoretical thematic analysis is driven by the theoretical interest of the researcher. Second level coding in this instance has been directed towards the specific research question posed in this study; what, if any, factors hinder and enhance the faith development of fourteen to seventeen years old youth (Silverman, 2006:84)? This should not be confused with content analysis in which categories of themes are decided on prior to the study (Ezzy, 2002:88). Semantic themes are derived when the researcher has no intention of looking at anything beyond what participants have said. The data is organized to show patterns in semantic content, summarised and interpreted through an attempt to theorize the significance of patterns and their broader meanings and implications (Silverman, 2006:84 & Braun and Clark, 2002:84). This means that this form of research lead the researcher into issues and problems she did not anticipate (Ezzy, 2002:88).

What the researcher wanted to answer or know through the codes used was considered here. It was clarified that the participants' understandings of faith development and Christianity; the support or development of the church, family and friends and also the influences in the form of hindrances and contributions on this faith development were the three key areas that would be coded into themes. Codes (data extracts) were then placed into meaningful groups. The use of mind-maps has assisted the researcher in this process. An example of this can be seen in figure 2 below:

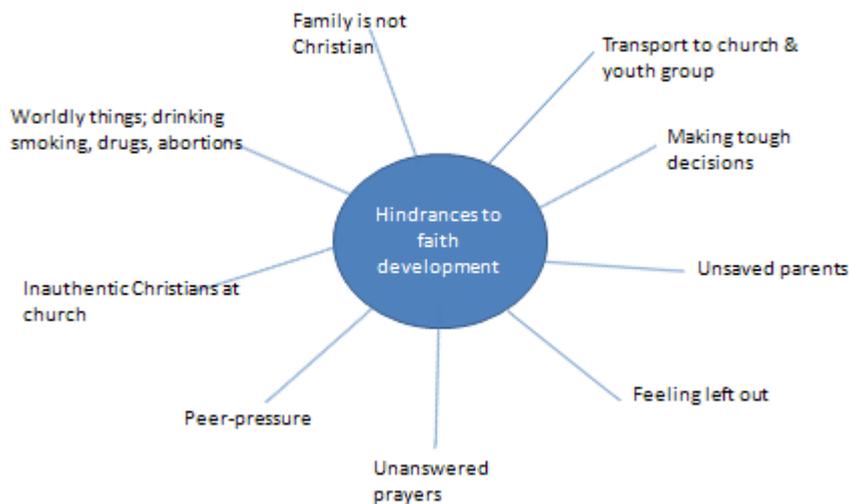


Figure 2

#### 4.3.1.4 Search for themes

During phase three, the researcher sorted the codes (data extracts from second column) into themes through the assistance of two external researchers as noted above. This was done by drawing mind-maps with the theme in the centre and placing the extracts gathered at the tips thereof. What counted as a theme was determined by how this theme addressed the research question; what, if any, factors hinder or enhance the faith development of fourteen to seventeen years old youth? (Braun & Clark, 2006:84). The themes were formulated summarising the question posed about the research question on the questionnaire used in the interviews. The mind-map (example below) depicts all the responses to that question. Many responses were repeated by different participants, accounting for the few phrases around the mind-map but these responses were not used as the primary indicative factors. A theme may be given more attention in certain data items than others and vice versa depending on the research question posed (ibid). An example of this is illustrated below:



Figure 3

Extracts that were similar were coloured coded and formed clusters (subheadings) under the theme. Figure 3 depicts what factors hinders the faith development of the youth. Green depicted factors related to friend or peer pressure; blue depicted Christians who pretend; orange depicted a sense of feeling rejected and yellow depicted family that are not Christian (saved). These have been surmised as a lack of positive influences in the lives of these youth. Here themes were connected in terms of the relationship that existed among them. The main and sub thematic categories arose from this exercise (phase). One of the prior concerns the researcher had was whether this method of analysis would address the voices of all the different participants (youth, youth leaders and pastors) as the instruction was to include all extracts irrespective of who the respondent was. This concern was dispelled as soon as the themes took form. This was because there were very few differences in the participants' responses.

#### 4.3.1.5 Review themes

During phase four, the researcher reviewed the themes by listing all colour codes along with its themes on a separate sheet of paper along with the names chosen jointly by the three researchers. These names were formulated with the research question; what, if any, factors hinder or enhance the faith development of fourteen to seventeen years old youth in mind. Each theme was reviewed by also looking at whether the extracts attached to these were relevant to the names given. Figure 4 depicts the thematic map drawn during this phase:

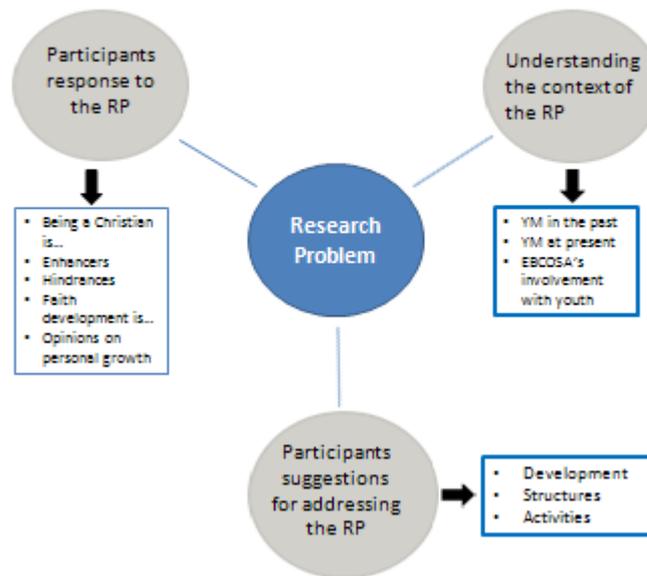


Figure 4

The thematic map in figure 4 depicts that the themes chosen from the empirical study could be summarised as a threefold approach to answering the research question posed in this study. The first section could be described as assisting the researcher in understanding the context out of which the research problem was born. The second section acknowledges the participants' (youth, pastors, elders and youth leaders) responses to the research problem. The third and last section listens to participants suggestions on how to address the research problem. This map is elaborated on further in chapter five of this dissertation.

#### 4.3.1.6 Define and name themes

During phase five, the researcher defined and named themes. This phase began in phase four. The names were verified by asking what aspect of the data each theme captured without having to paraphrase extracts. It is in this phase that a detailed analysis of each theme in the form of a story answering the research question was written out. This was done through first writing two or three sentences that connected the theme to the research question. Names that are concise and immediately identify what it says to the reader were chosen (Clark & Braun, 2006). These are discussed in chapter five.

#### 4.3.1.7 Write the report

During phase six, the final written report in the form of the research findings is written. This phase forms the main thrust of chapter five and will be elaborated on then but does not serve merely as a written report since this is not a summary or article.

#### 4.3.2 Challenges experienced during the empirical process

This segment of the process describes some of the challenges the researcher experienced during the empirical study. This serves to acknowledge that the process is not as firm as the literature dictates and also that the researcher can still improve in this area.

##### 4.3.2.1 Transcriptions

###### 4.3.2.1.1 Non-verbal language in transcriptions

The reliability of the interpretation of the transcriptions may be gravely weakened by a failure to transcribe apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps (Silverman, 2001:230). The transcriptions used in this dissertation were transcribed by three different people. Professionally, they were transcribed by someone from the University Department of Research Development. This was found too expensive resorting in using a colleague who has majored in English. The last transcriptions were transcribed personally by the researcher. This was after a late discovery that some transcriptions had been lost (due to laptop crash). The differences in the quality of transcriptions resulted in not having the non-verbal language of all participants recorded throughout the data set. The quality of the study could have been better if this was taken into consideration but this did not jeopardize the total quality of the data found. David Silverman (2001:231) confirms this by saying researchers should not delude themselves into seeking a perfect transcript. Transcripts can always be improved and the search for perfection is illusory and time-consuming.

###### 4.3.2.1.2 Quality of transcriptions

Part of the process of thematic analysis (during phase one) is that the researcher read and re-read through the entire data set (transcriptions). It was here that she discovered that two focus groups were not accurately transcribed because of the background noise on the

recorded tapes. It took additional time for these to be edited in correlation with the written notes made on the questionnaires before these transcriptions were accurate.

#### 4.3.2. 2 Change in the size of the sample

David Silverman (2001:253) notes a change in the size of the research sample as a natural part of the research process. Two of the congregations (see letter sent to the EBCOSA as attached addendum G) included in the original sample of this study were not included due to health reasons on the part of one pastor and insufficient planning on the part of the other who were the access points and contact persons for this empirical study. The researcher in no way makes these pastors accountable for the success of the research process. The extract from the researcher's field notes below would enable some clarity regarding this challenge:

Unfortunately one of the Gauteng congregations did not materialize due to insufficient planning from the pastor. The planned congregation had cancelled due to some challenges within the congregation (one of which was the youth leader's last minute decision to go to Bible College). The second congregation approached did not confirm a date due to the pastor taking ill. This was all at least 2 weeks prior to coming to Gauteng.

The researcher tried contacting two other pastors to see whether their congregation could be used but found that two weeks was too short notice. The total sample ended up being eight out of ten congregations within the EBCOSA. One focus group per congregation was planned but only seven of the eight congregations were conducted.

#### 4.4. Analysis and evaluation of research findings

According to Osmer (2008: 139), sound theological and ethical interpretation is based on universal practices that are validated by the researcher. During this analysis, specific events (past youth ministry practices) within and outside of the EBCOSA are evaluated. During this process, present practices, principles and the vision of the EBCOSA and the reasons behind these are discussed. Successful practices within this denomination's history are also discussed. Finally, models of good practice in other evangelical contexts are sought in the literature studies conducted (chapters two and three) in order to assist the EBCOSA. These practices are aimed at providing this denomination with new ideas that would transform how they view faith formation in their youth ministry (ibid: 153).

The introduction of this chapter noted that faith development has been the focus in this empirical study within the context of it being an aspect of faith formation. The challenge with relying on developmental theories is that these theories were not formulated with religious education as its goal. They do not focus on learning or even the ecclesial traditional influences that come with it. Fowler's theory assists in this regard but is still not exhaustive. All these theories are based on generalizations which go against relational youth ministry. Individual needs, contexts and experiences of young people differ and should not be excluded in their faith formation processes. All changes may be developmental but the circumstances, events and social influences may differ (Dykstra in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 260 & 262). Theologians and Christian leaders should incorporate these theories with sound empirical studies so that the voices of the youth can be personally heard on this matter. This dissertation relies heavily on international academic scholars and as such required that these sources be tested in a South African context. This was the motivation for conducting an empirical study.

#### 4.4.1 Faith formation within the EBCOSA according to the research findings

The themes chosen from the empirical study could be summarised as a threefold approach to answering the research question posed in this study. The first section could be described as assisting the researcher in understanding the *context* out of which the research problem was born. The second section acknowledges the participants' (youth, pastors, elders and youth leaders) *responses* to the research problem. The third and last section listens to participants suggestions on *how to address* the research problem. Each section is reported by stating the question posed in the interview, reporting on what the responses were and referencing relevant quotations from data extracts (transcriptions). How each section relates to relevant academic theory is mentioned but these are again summarised in the summary discussion at the end and again later in chapter five through a comparative analysis.

##### 4.4.1.1 Category 1: The context out of which the research problem was born

It has been established that research (academic and non-academic) on youth faith formation in the EBCOSA is limited. This research study is the first inquiry into the state of youth ministry in this denomination. It is due to these limitations that interviews with the leadership (pastors and youth leaders) included a reflection into the past and present state of youth ministry as well as the involvement of the church body in the faith formation of its

youth. Chapter three noted that the theological interpretations of denominational faith traditions have played an important role in how people understand spirituality (Hall & McMinn, 2003:185). An understanding of the theological backgrounds of these faith traditions is important to understand the effect various practices have on people's use of and perception of spirituality. The EBCOSA believe that dependence on God and His word for one's spiritual well-being is important. The Christian takes his or her place within God's order and (who) expresses devotion to God in obedience to his Word (ibid:191). It was important that the researcher hear how the participants understood and thought about youth ministry in relation to its faith formation as this would give an indication of what the denomination was teaching and practicing. The questions posed in 1.1 to 1.3 of the interview questionnaire (addendum I) were posed to their leaders as they would have the experience to give an historical account of youth ministry in the EBCOSA.

#### 4.4.1.1.1 Youth ministry in EBCOSA in the past (theme 1.1)

*What has your past experience of youth ministry in EBCOSA been? What has the impact thereof been?*

Most, if not all participants involved in the leadership with youth ministry in the EBCOSA could speak about how they experienced youth ministry in the past. The past here could be seen as a decade or more ago as most leaders (pastors and elders) were over the age of 25 years old. Three core sub-themes describe youth ministry in the EBCOSA in the past, namely; church involvement with the youth, challenges faced and youth that were motivated.

##### a) Church involvement with youth:

Youth ministry in the EBCOSA in the past was characterised by the church (members and leaders) being involved in the lives of the young people. The "youth was the feeding body to the church"<sup>94</sup> and the youth "became leaders in the church". The adults "wanted to be associated with youth and children" and had "close relationships" with them. "(S)ound Bible teaching" through "teaching the Word of God and Christian values" was practiced within the church. This teaching led to many "young people (getting) saved at conference". The church is responsible for preaching and teaching its youth (Groome, 1980:77). Chapter two mentioned that Marlin Olsen was one of the key founding missionaries of the EBCOSA.

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<sup>94</sup> All references in parenthesis are quotations taken directly from the data extracts. This usage of participants' verbatim phrases and quotations is intended to create a narrative approach to writing of the research findings.

Olsen viewed youth ministry as a feeder into the church work and it seems this perception was passed onto the leadership:

*It has always been good, I always had fun. The leaders I had always went out of their way to teach us the word of God and Christian values and I always had a good experience... if making learning the Bible fun wasn't there, I don't think I would have wanted to learn anymore or if no one took the time to teach me about the Bible or help me understand more about what God wants from me, then I would not have done it for anyone else that is here.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL. 1)

*It has been really good. Coming out of, being a youth participant in EBC, it was really good. It definitely was part of the molding and the development process as I had as a young person.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*Look, I was involved with youth even before I came into EBC...So, my youth, the outlook for youth then has always been the fact that young people mustn't see themselves as an isolated group but they are part of the bigger group, you know, and that one leads to the other. From youth, it doesn't end there but you do become involved in the church ministry, and you become involved in church life, so to speak... We had youth on a Wednesday and then on a Friday night, we had what was called youth Bible study, you know, where we could ask any question concerning any subject, you know. And the leader then would go and prepare, and come back, and share that, and take us through doctrine, take us through cults, take us through end times, you know, so that, as a young person, you begin to realise, you know, that serving the Lord involves so much more than what I'm just made to understand here.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

#### b) Motivation of youth:

Youth in the EBCOSA's past were self-motivated. They were always "wanting to be there" and "wanting to be involved". Youth ministry was "always pleasant" and "always good and fun because the leader went out of their way". Chapter two reported that church leaders and pastors report that young people were involved in the early mission work of the denomination. Pastors (Louw, Saunders & Matham) report that youth were very active in the early church planting endeavours of the church, many of whom became the pastors (Willenberg, 2013:1) It was easier back then because the "youth had more Christian friends" who encouraged them and shared the same values. Many "young people were going to Bible College" to study God's Word and go into full-time ministry. Many of the present leadership followed this path to becoming leaders of the denomination today.

*...having a few youngsters there that was not forced to come to church, not forced to come to youth, they are there because they want to be there because of their experience with the Lord being first generation Christians*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*A lot different than the youth of today. I think it was, youth in our days was also a little, I would not say structured, but it was a little closed. We were not allowed to associate with too many of the other youth groups; it was very in-based so it was just EBC. But we had good relationships with our youth leaders, it was lots of fun activities but it was also sound biblical teaching... It helped to ground us in the EBC doctrine*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*There seems to have been then a spirit of wanting to be involved, you know, wanting to be involved with youth in spite of all that might have been going on, you know. But the young people wanted you to be there. They wanted to be associated with the youth and with the church... have been a number that have actually become moved on from youth, and become actually involved with the local church and some have actually attained, you know, the leadership positions in the church*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

#### c) Challenges:

As in any ministry, youth ministry in the EBCOSA has dealt with ministerial challenges. This has been evidenced mostly in recent years in which “not much (has been) done, (with) no one taking responsibility”. The “lack of co-operation” amongst the youth leaders and also the “inconsistency” of the ministry have led to many youth groups closing. Most of the youth leaders interviewed are categorized as part of the younger generation of church leadership. Some describe their youth days as times in which young people already “never attended”, “don’t wanna hear church rules” and “never knowing what the Bible says”. It seems these trends silently crept into what is now the state of youth ministry in the EBCOSA. This is not an isolated phenomenon. Chapter three noted the dangers of assuming that all biblical teaching will be evidenced in the lives of the youth and later leaders. It was argued that by the time these youth reach early adulthood (18 years and older), they do not see any value or reasons for the Biblical content and stories of the Christian faith as these are not found applicable to their daily lives. They live according to what is morally right in their eyes according to what was taught them concerning Christianity in their earlier youth days (Setran & Kiesling 2013:23- 27). Sadly, these young adults have become the products of how the church has prioritised its youth ministry. They have neglected the hard work of teaching, shepherding and mentoring these youth through discipleship. The very strengths of evangelicalism now serve as its weakness with regards to faith formation. A strong focus on

biblical truth has helped maintain a solid foundation for faith but has also lead to inappropriate rationalism and false denigration of spiritual practices. One of these younger leaders could not respond to this question because he has:

*Never attended youth ministry in EBC. I used to just go to church services on Sunday. Just going to church for the sake of church, always doing my own thing – drugs and stuff.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 3, YL 1)

*There has been a dip in the attendance as I see it and we tried in 2008 at the conference (\*<sup>95</sup>) in PE... I can only engage nationally what happens at conference. So that has been my experience with young people and then obviously here in our church.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

Youth leaders were taught at church but did not understand biblical relevance for their lifestyles. Even though the national youth ministry of the EBCOSA has been evaluated by the attendance of young people at its annual conference, the evaluation cannot be accurate since only an average of ten to twenty per cent of the denomination's youth attends this event.

#### 4.4.1.1.2 Youth ministry in EBCOSA at present (theme 1.2)

*What is your present experience of youth ministry in EBCOSA? What has the impact thereof been?*

Currently, two prevalent themes described how participants see youth ministry in the EBCOSA. It was interesting to see how this present situation is given an overall and a specific description. Several participants mentioned that the “EBCOSA has big problems”. This statement was followed by descriptions from the young people and also its leadership at present. What was interesting to the researcher was that despite the negative description that follows, glimpses of hope and positive influences through what she phrases ‘shiny eyes’<sup>96</sup>, exist.

##### a) “EBCOSA has big problems”

The naming of this theme was difficult to detach from the actual words used by participants because the researcher has heard this statement on different occasions prior to and

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<sup>95</sup> A word has been taken out of this quote to discard immediate connection to the participant

<sup>96</sup> This term is elaborated on under point d) below (4.4.1.1.2).

during this research study. Other than the changes in the type of young people and also leadership to these youth, another reason for the denomination having problems is that the “Youth group is operating in isolation”. Pastors were concerned that youth ministry is not being considered as part of the church body resulting in most operating as though detached from the church. This concern should also be considered in view of the close ties youth and adults had in the past. Chapter two discussed that the present state of youth ministry in the EBCOSA exists within a post- apartheid South Africa where there are as many different liturgical traditions and doctrinal teachings as there are cultures. Spirituality is publicly encouraged through various media forms (television, radio, internet, advertisements, et al). Unfortunately these are focused on personal spirituality and not the importance of fellowship for this spirituality to develop. Much of what the media portrays as Christianity is not necessarily biblical principles. In a post-apartheid South Africa, people are discouraged from church fellowship and encouraged to serve God in their personal spaces at the expense of growing through the accountability of other Christians. Christianity seems to be focused on a spirituality that is focused on self and an increasing disregard for tradition and collectivity (Smit, 2009:412).

*Our people, which should be the leaders, already started to become more materialistic in their ways you see. So it affects the next generation worse than even them because they have now, for instance some people will take the Manchester game more important than the Bible Study you understand, so the children, they are teaching their children, um, you know, without saying anything...we compromising more. I mean we; the denomination and leadership as a whole... Instead of us saying no the church needs to set the standard, but it seems that world is setting the standard for us, how we going to draw young people by using these forms of things. My view is the word must always set the standard... You see, the minute we start compromising that is where the problems start. Because we must understand, especially when it comes to youth ministry, young people would do everything in their power to see how far they can go and if they can shift that boundary they will do it you see.*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*We've lost a lot of young people. Young people have actually left EBC and become involved in other churches... leadership down might really not even have youth on their heart*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

#### b) Characteristics of youth:

One of the reasons for EBCOSA's big problems is the type of young people it now needs to minister to. The youth in EBCOSA at present have “(b)ecome materialistic through giving into worldly standards” just as the adults have been described above. They have “no relationship with Christ” and have “Compromised by moving away from foundational

beliefs” of the church. The youth of today are “(u)nruly” and are “(o)nly interested in games and fun”. This can also be evidenced in the “(t)ypes of dance” they are bringing into the church. Many of the “kids (are) not EBC”. Someone even added that “some have learning disabilities” broadening the scope and challenges of what youth ministry should be addressing. These characteristics are in contrast to the youth described in the past.

Participants in this study were also asked whether they are members or adherents (these terms were explained in chapter two under the governance of the EBCOSA) of this denomination and if so, for how long. All the pastors and youth leaders reported being members of EBCOSA. Approximately, fourteen young people reported being members whilst others reported being adherents; attending the EBCOSA youth meetings but belonging to another church. The average timeframe of the members jointly is four years and six months.

*I think there is still a lot of groundwork to be done..... your youth is supposed to be the feeding body – young people coming through youth successfully serving the Lord still – 17, 18 and 19. But if you don't have that youth feeding, you will have to get people come from the world into the church and you then have to spend more time training them, teaching them the basics at that level in order for them to be in leadership much later. I think that has been the problem... no real feed from the youth to Bible college as far as leadership is concerned.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*There is a lot less loyalty to EBC... not many of our churches have youth ministry. From ( name of church) we have a lot of kids where we have a lot more kids from parents who don't belong to the church coming to youth as supposed to parents of children from the church... we have actually lost some of our youth because their parents have decided they have to go to their own youth groups*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*Most of our youngsters are moving away from the foundations of our belief and therefore they have compromised a lot and so that system makes it very difficult to implement within the EBC church...because of internal pressure and difficulties that our church have been faced with. Our young people have become a little bit unruly, but now I have also through the same system that I have learned. Youngsters think they can do as the please... obviously you might lose your young people, but the ones you keep. You know you win solid people in them.*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*I don't think we had in the early days so much pressure as our young people are under today. I don't think there was that amount of pressure. Sure, there was, but not as our young people encounter today. I think they are under tremendous amount of pressure, you know... And the spiritual side of that has basically been lost, you know.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

*Because with the youth we have now in SA, things have just gone hay wire. Pregnancies, like last year, I was telling some of my friends, I had about 5 girls that I knew that was pregnant in one year. And all of that, and it mean it happens even with, you would think that once you are 18, you are bit more mature and you understand the whole idea of AIDS and sexual morality and so, but even as you grow older, others still go to parties, they drink, they know what it is like, but still. I think it gets harder.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*(It is a) time when they really want to do bad stuff and try stuff.*

(Int.1, Cong. 7, R 1)

Youth going through a period of identity formation may experience different sides to faith at different times in their faith journey. They may thus require different things and contexts along this journey. Faith is also a lived reality in which human developmental changes are incorporated. Chapter three noted that music (as a form of worshipping God) influences the formation of youth identity especially in a South African context in which identity was previously measured by race but is now greatly influenced by the kinds of music youth listen to (Nel & Thesnaar, 2006:94). Dance is an integral part of young people's lives and should not be negated because of traditional church praxis.

c) Youth leadership:

Chapter two noted that resources in the EBCOSA are limited. Many local congregations do not have youth clubs or a formal youth ministry because of insufficient leadership. People are afraid of availing themselves because the local congregation does not have the finances and administrative support to sustain these ministries resulting is past leadership being burnt out. A second reason for EBCOSA's big problems has been the lack of prioritizing its youth leadership. "(T)here's no national structure" in which youth ministry operates despite this denomination being governed by a national council. This council does not include a youth ministry portfolio. "(Y)outh leaders are not being included in planning". Some participants have said that there is "no development of youth leaders" whilst others have noted that "Developing leaders from youth ministry" seems to be the practice. Many of the youth leaders interviewed were quite young (between 22 – 30 years old) with relatively no training and experience of youth ministry. Some complaints against the youth leaders were that the "Word of God is not first"; there is no "relationships with youth" as was the case in earlier years and also the "youth leaders are not working together". The EBCOSA has also had the tradition of

having combined youth meetings when all the smaller groups get together for a joint meeting within the different regions. It seems this too has faded away with the latter being the cause thereof. Chapter two mentioned CYAG as one of these regional committees responsible for the training and organization of events for all the youth clubs in the EBCOSA in the Western Cape. CYAG also supported the youth leaders in areas they were struggling in. Most of this ministry was, and still is, the burden of the missionary or youth leader, and not the church resulting in the cessation of many of these youth activities.

*I think it gets harder each year. The more you learn about what the teens go through, who they are – I don't think it becomes more complicated, but it becomes more in-depth, more involved, more commitment becomes necessary.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*There is really no set form of structure ...The youth leaders also don't work together or want to work together. They are not really connecting... they choose youth leaders because they need somebody for that role. And then that person is not equipped. The EBC should have a structure where they really give a year or two year training as for a youth leader. They should have something in place like that... the pastor just takes somebody to fill that position... young people, they need somebody that they can respect, who knows what they are talking about*

(Int. 5, Cong. 1, YL 1)

*As far as leadership is concerned on youth level quite early they are asked to presume a leadership role in the youth. They are in charge of programmes and stuff like that and I give them readings and I want them to be able to share from the bible even if it is their own devotion but share it with a group of 10 to 15 people and to be able to be confident in sharing that.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*The problem with EBCOSA is they (are) what you call it.. programme orientated. Everyone is trying to get the best programme on the market to entertain the youngsters and I believe that is the wrong way to go. If we do not teach our young people, that listen, the word of God is the first and foremost thing for doing youth ministry, then we have lost the battle.*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*There is no national structure, no national structure. There is no regional structures in the sense of regional youth; you know, co-ordination, co-operation. And so, each individual, each youth group is actually operating in isolation... no co-ordination between the various bodies or groups with the result that our young people are isolated. In fact, our young people don't really know the youth of the other churches...they themselves (youth leaders) are battling and the youth are looking to them for leadership. And if they see that this person doesn't really know where he is going, how can they follow, you now? And I would say, from that perspective, if the leader knows where he is going, the leader*

*knows exactly, this is where I intend, where my youth are, and this is where I want them to be... the fact of us not electing leaders as they ought to be elected.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

d) Shiny eyes:

In their book, *The Art of Possibility*, Benjamin and Rosamund Stone Zander (2000) encourage people to live lives of possibility amidst all the despair and challenges faced daily. It is here that they introduce the concept of shiny eyes as those glimpses of possibility that we sometimes overlook amidst the challenges. It is their encouragement to look for these shiny eyes as possibilities for change. Amidst the big problems that the EBCOSA faces with regards to its youth ministry, participants of this study have expressed some shiny eyes (glimpses of possibility). Youth leaders “are (still) teaching values and morals” and have placed “focus on Bible study”. “Learning about God’s Word” is still a priority for youth in the EBCOSA and this is further evidenced in other findings discussed later.

*Like when we plan meetings, we include them. You see, so you are not doing everything yourself. So to my knowledge they are just as important. It is important for us to hear what is in their minds. What would they like to see...So they are part of the plan. – they get a roster with the plan for the next six months of the year so they can put it on their calendar and say, hey, I am looking forward to that event, and that event*

(Int. 5, Cong. 1, YL 1)

*I am confident... I think now that I know so much about the word of God, nothing is going to stop me.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*You don't just read you read it to understand... maybe we can do a visitation to our congregation members because some of them do have like problems at home like and things like that and the always come to church thinking ok if I come to church its maybe gonna take it away but then they just come to church and then they go back home. So they need prayer, so if we like do visitations to them and things like that you can encourage them with prayer and that will help them with their struggles because some people come to church thinking ok if I come to church every Sunday my problems will be solved.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

*Basically, I'd first have to define faith and I think it's found in Hebrews 11. Can I just have a preview (takes a Bible)... Ya, Hebrews 11 (scanning through the Bible).*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

Yust (2006:4) believes it is better to understand faith as a gift from God and an act of grace in which God chooses to be in relationship with the young person rather than limiting faith to a set of beliefs based on the young person’s cognitive ability. How the young person

responds to God's faithfulness requires commitment (Strommen & Hardel, Dykstra, et al). Fowler adds that faith as the active, patterned process help people understand their relations to self, others, and the world in light of their awareness of relatedness to the ultimate conditions of existence (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 16). For youth, it also means taking the perspectives of the others around you seriously and not merely considering your own. The values, meanings, worldviews of those trusted should also be considered. This knowledge gives the youth other perspectives that could inform how they make meaning of their lives.

#### 4.4.1.1.3 The EBCOSA's involvement in the faith development of youth (theme 1.3)

*Has EBCOSA been involved in developing the faith of these young people? Why?/ Why not?*

Chapter one mentioned that this research study was birthed from personal motivations of the researcher, having been a young person and eventually a youth leader in the denomination studied. One of the researcher's main assumptions was that the EBCOSA has not been involved in developing the faith of its youth. For this reason, she felt it necessary to ask participants if they sensed the denomination was involved in the young people's faith development. The reader should be reminded that this enquiry was exclusive to the leadership and not the youth. This category could also be confirmed by later inquiry into the factors affecting this faith development. The EBCOSA's involvement in the faith development of its youth has been perceived positively and negatively.

Positively, the church is involved through praying and being there for its youth. This has been voiced through leaders saying that "we pray earnestly for youth" and "encourage young people and being there for them". The "younger leaders are trying their best to organize events" for the youth.

(Referring to annual conference, 2008, where issue of youth ministry was addressed) *I do think that our churches, their hearts are in the right place and it might not have been like that over the years but I think as younger people become leaders... And I think that has been the turnaround in the EBC for the young people. That we are interested in the young person itself and not so much on how we look as far as the denomination is concerned. What people think of us, young people are actually more valuable than our reputation...Because they are right here in our faces and we are called to deal with them. So I think at places it did follow through but just recognizing that we are in trouble as far as our young*

*people are concerned was good. I think that was the beginning of some healing taking place in the denomination.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*We are trying everything in our power. .. The problem in EBC is the implementation of things, you understand, it's not so much the theory, because I believe all of us have adequate understanding of what we supposed to be doing, but the problem is the implementation of these things that causes the hindrance to this.*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

Chapter two mentioned that during 2009, two young pastors, Anton Jacobs and Llewellyn Saville drafted a letter of recommendations (addendum D) for children and youth ministry in the EBCOSA for all the national churches. These recommendations concerned the spiritual development of children and youth. That these were younger pastors is significant to the excerpts above because even though they were suggested (and formerly at that) they were not taken seriously.

Negatively; “youth ministry is not seen as important”. “(M)oney is an issue” and in most instances there is “no youth group” meetings. Chapter two mentioned reports (Louw, 2013:3) from people who have been fostered in this denomination, in which many regional and national youth camps, youth coffee bars and fun days were held and great numbers of youth attending the Annual Conferences. The ministry of Bible Band and Wayside Sunday school seems to have been the highlights. Sunday school classes were even held in members’ homes. Youth was not merely a Friday night occurrence. Many of the present day pastors (Matham, Hartze, and Vandayar) also recall older men and women in the congregation who walked alongside them as young people and mentored them. Neville Willenberg (2013:2), a respected elder in the denomination reports that there was a time (1968) when the Regional council mandated young men to do outreach in the local communities of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The excerpts below are testimony that the church is not actively involved in the faith formation of its youth.

*As an entire body, I would say no... because you have seen the kind of deterioration of youth in EBC. So many of our churches have closed their youth groups – either due to a lack of personnel or a lack of children... part of the reason is that adults don't see the importance of a youth ministry. We have had lots of talks and studies and nothing has come down to grassroots level... we are trying this here on our own to organize a youth camp for, because I mean we haven't even had youth camps for quite a number of years*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*Our churches let me be honest with you, very seldom cater for our young people... And I don't think our churches are actually building a resource library... if you go back to the early days, yes there was, but now, no, no. I would say, no. EBC these days has definitely not*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

#### 4.4.1.2 Category 2: Participants' responses to the research problem

This section of themes can be summarised as what participants thought or felt are the answers to the research problem. The themes unravelled in this section could be summed up as the heart of this empirical study. Participants reflected knowledge (understanding of being a Christian and faith development) and also personal alliance (factors and opinion of growth) as possible responses to the research problem.

##### 4.4.1.2.1 Being a Christian is... (theme 2.1)

*What is your understanding of being a Christian?<sup>97</sup>*

This question was posed exclusively to the youth because how these youth articulate their faith has been deemed important to their faith formation (Smith and Denton, 2005). Participants understanding of being a Christian can be summarised as being personally committed and also being actively involved in one's faith. One participant noted that one can be "a Christian but not saved".

##### a) Being personally committed:

Being personally committed means that I "believe in Jesus Christ and have faith" and have a "personal relationship with God" through "trusting Christ as personal Saviour". This commitment is further evidenced by "giving yourself to God" through "following the Bible" and "Being what Jesus wants you to be". This can only be done if I "have faith" and I "trust the Lord". This level of commitment seems to be on affective level (Strommen & Hardel, 2000).

*To believe in Jesus... To have faith... by being baptized*

(Int. 2, Cong. 7, R 1)

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<sup>97</sup> This question was followed by *Are you a Christian?*

*To serve the Lord...Being faithful...To God...To know his Word, talking to him, praying*

(Int.1, Cong. 7, R 1)

This section aligns with Daniel Migliore's (2004:410) understanding of the Christian faith as a personal response and a wholehearted dedication to Christ and not solely to church traditions through its doctrine and rituals. This commitment involves one's mind, will and affection. It goes beyond adherence to church doctrines but it also does not ignore the importance of what churches teach. The Christian faith believes that God exists and that He (as Christ) died for us arose from the grave and lives today. This results in a personal commitment to Christ. Faith, as a commitment of the mind requires knowledge of biblical truth that will assess traditional belief accordingly (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 77). Not many of the youth in this study understood Christianity as personal commitment.

b) Doing:

Participants in this study noted "studying the Word of God"; "church attendance and service"; "Bible reading and prayer"; "repentance and asking God to come into my life"; "acknowledging sin and accepting Christ as Saviour"; "spreading the Gospel" and "preaching the Word" as practices or deeds exemplary of a being a Christian. "(W)hat we do for God" and "helping out" becomes the active ways in which Christians are "serving the Lord". This level of commitment seems to be on a participatory level. It is this relational component of faith that allows the formation of communities of people who share common priorities and these priorities keep them connected. This is very important for youth as they are searching for spaces where they belong and where they can connect. What was interesting about this theme was that participants also connected "getting to know the Lord through service" to moral choices and behaviour towards others. "(K)nowing about Jesus and doing the right thing" as well as "love (for) other people and do the right thing" were some of the responses of participants when asking what being a Christian meant. This is not unusual considering that identity and moral development are all characteristic of youth who are developing in their faith.

*If you listen carefully to our young people they have a confused view of what a Christian is supposed to be doing. They don't want to be taught how to do it properly, and that's where they go wrong, you see, but the minute they realise they need to have a teachable spirit, then they will learn much more. They will accept the proper teaching, but unfortunately they don't have a teachable spirit and that hinders their growth*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*... Coming to church. I was not involved in so many of the ministries. Many people after church they just leave straight away, but the fellowship after church is also important. So I have learnt that – so being a Christian is also about fellowship. It is also important to be involved in as many ministries as possible so whenever you have time, you have to be here because it is not about you, it is about the Lord. So basically being a Christian is more than just saying that you are Christian, reading your bible, you have to be involved in God's word... Yes, I am a Christian*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*Coming to church and serving God... Not like always, but some people do believe that they are Christians if they are like in their houses and don't attend church and so it is like the right thing to do – to come to church... Yes (I am Christian)*

(Int. 3, Cong. 1, R 1)

*First of all you need to know the Lord as your saviour. You need to also like implement in your life like reading the Bible. Always praying asking God to help you. Then you can also have like a prayer partner. The two of you can like pray and grow spiritually and what else. You need to go out and evangelize to other people who do not know Christ. That will also show like that you are not shy to show everyone else that you are a Christian. And you want to know the Lord and spread the good news of the Lord. You need to show in your actions and everyday life that you are a Christian... yes (I am a Christian)*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

*...someone that finally comes to a point and he realizes that we are here by grace and he finally accords God with that acknowledgement that we are here because of him and hmmm, like the book I read the Purpose Driven life by Rick Warren, basically sums up everything we need to know as Christians. Why we are here and our personal ambitions is not important. What we do for God is more important. Living for Him and worshipping him. It doesn't matter what we want out of life because without him we can do nothing. So ya, that was a great book that I read... yes I am a Christian.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

In chapter three, the researcher referred to modes of faith formation as the different ways people (parents and faith communities) have encouraged faith formation in their different contexts which enable young people to express their faith. This chapter also discussed the importance of youth being taught that these modes (disciplines) are not what make them righteous Christians but are placed in a position to be drawn into Christ fully. Wilhoit (2008:45) argued that this positioning changes one's attitude as well because it expands one's love, obedience and repentance toward a deepening trust in God. Through service, young people become teachable and gain a genuine motivation for learning about God and His Word. Service enables opportunities for these youth to practice what they have

learnt. They need to be equipped for the areas of service they are involved in so that they understand that their response is not obligatory but gospel orientated (ibid: 150). It is important at this point to note that youth need to also learn about themselves and what they are capable and incapable of whilst being involved in ministry. Young people need to be equipped to become a witness to all the people they relate to. This includes been taught hospitality because if they are taught how to serve and love others in whichever contexts they encounter them, less people will rely on the faith community solely for what they can consume (ibid: 157).

#### 4.4.1.2.2 Faith development is... (theme 2.2)

*What is your understanding of faith development?*

*Unfortunately we also are now wary of those words because of the abuse of the word faith... it deals with spiritual growth, but it has more of a superficial understanding of the word faith.*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*Discipleship and growing in your faith, are they not one and the same?*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

*Basically, I'd first have to define faith and I think it's found in Hebrews 11. Can I just have a preview (takes a Bible)... Ya, Hebrews 11 (scanning through the Bible). It says here, to have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for to be certain of the things we cannot see. Hmmm basically that is faith you know having things we do not see and faith development is basically developing you know structuring that and strengthening our faith and belief in things we can't see, so. Ya, that's what faith is.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

Almost all participants struggled with this term but what was interesting in the above extracts is the tension in responses from pastors as opposed to those given by the young people. Some pastors were not happy the term faith development as they felt it was minimizing spiritual growth. The young people confidently answered by even using a Bible during the interview. The researcher was aware of this and included a proceeding question: When you hear the words faith development, which words come to mind:

Spiritual growth	Spiritual maturity	Discipleship	Growing in your faith
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Almost all participants responded with spiritual growth and discipleship. The response below can thus also be a reflection on what they understand these two concepts as.

a) A process:

“(S)piritual growth” and “spiritual maturity” were the words used by most of the participants interviewed in this study. In fact, many initially did not understand what was being asked of them until given the choice of different words. Spiritual growth is an “ongoing process” in which one is “growing in one’s faith” through consistently aiming at “understanding who God is”. As an aspect of identity and moral formation it means “growing up” into one’s faith.

*You’ll see by their fruits. Like you know the person now and after two weeks of Bible study or a few months. You’ll be able to see the difference in how the people approach the situation or you’ll see how they actually, how they grow spiritually. How they handle their situations and how they used to handle it. So I think it’s actually good to evaluate after every two three months, you just look back and see oh this person was here and now they here. Have they made an improvement or not.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 3, YL. 1)

*It is an ongoing process... The process is different to each individual. But we would like to as a church have the tools available and have the opportunity available for them to grow, to have the infrastructure in place that will help you grow, because if it is not a deliberate thing to grow, I don’t think it will happen. So I think firstly decide that you want to grow and then make use of the opportunities around you to make it happen.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*I think it gets harder as you grow.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*How young people serve the Lord and get better, and progress in serving the Lord.*

(Int.1, Cong. 7, R 1)

*You need to speak to people about God hey. And then also you need to get other people’s understandings of what other people understand of being faithful and how you can grow spiritually. And you always have to know that God is there to help you like during the struggles and things like that. That’s why you always grow and praying all the time*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

Chapter three concluded by saying that faith formation is a life-long process requiring multiple ministry approaches and not just one specific program. The task of faith formation is to preach and teach young people the gospel so that they are able to understand it better, and gain greater confidence in it, and it has to confront false gods and idols present in these young people's lives. This confrontation enables youth to see the behaviours and attitudes that do not align with the gospel in order to change these. This process takes time and willingness to allow the gospel to daily intercept their lives (Wilhoit, 2008:31-32). When too much emphasis is placed on the gospel as a single decision for Christ, the youth and church do not see any need for any further faith formation to take place. The gospel passages reflect a young person's faith as real, not just a weak forerunner of adult spirituality but an example for adults. The spiritual life of youth is to be respected, protected, and nurtured (Stonehouse in Yust, et al, 2006:97). The more one discovers the more one realises that there is still so much more to learn about God. The mystery of faith is encountered in daily life and the circumstances these youth find themselves in. It is in the raw ordinary details of life as it happens. This mystery of God is given little attention in faith formation programs to youth (Yust, 2004: xxiii). Understanding faith as a mystery also acknowledges that the teacher does not have all the answers. Chapter three also noted the Christian faith as appropriate and intentional participation in the redemptive work of God.

b) A feeling (emotions):

Faith development (as spiritual growth) is; "having a strong belief in God", "having a faithful relationship with God" based on "trust" and "faith". As an aspect of identity and moral formation it also means "believing in oneself". This is done through actively "putting your trust in someone" and "trusting God to supply shortfalls". Faith development is also enhanced by reliance on God for what is needed.

*to have faith is that you cannot see and that you have to trust in God that he will supply that shortfall... it all boils down to the youth leader to, again, as I said, to make them understand what is faith*

(Int. 5, Cong. 1, YL 1)

*Like having faith in God. And like trusting in him....Spiritual maturity, maybe.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 1, R 1)

Being spiritual is an expression of all of one's being just as faith is. It is associated with a life-long journey rather than an academic theory. On an emotional level, the Christian faith is a practice of spirituality (ibid: 90) and this spirituality is our relationship to God, others, and

oneself. The main distinction is that Christian spirituality is grounded in Jesus Christ (Ackerman, 2001:19 & 135). Discipleship is about helping young people discover and strengthen their trust and faith in Jesus Christ. It is about helping them learn to trust God by creating spaces in which they can explore their relationship with Him (Powell, et al, 2013:34-35). This process could last several years. The mistake usually made by many Christians is that of detaching one's spiritual walk from everyday life. Young people are usually encouraged to forsake all worldly things in an effort to become better Christians disregarding the lifelong journey they have in growing in Christ. An understanding of what it means to live by hope in an uncertain future inspires them to want to grow further. Our capacity for thanksgiving, praise, and joy go hand in hand with our readiness for costly discipleship (Migliore, 2004: 245).

c) Acquiring Knowledge (intellect):

Knowledge is an important aspect of faith development. Chapter three referred to discipleship as the process of equipping young people with this kind of knowledge so that they could respond appropriately. "(K)nowing the structures that strengthen your faith", "wanting to know more about God", "becoming more knowledgeable about the Bible" and "knowing God and speaking about God". This knowledge needs to also include understanding through knowing and "learning about different faiths and religions" because faith development is not restricted to the Christian faith. Young people should also be equipped to interact with peers of another faith and understand why they believe in their Christian faith. Acquiring knowledge about the Christian faith could also mean "improving one's skills". This would be true in a lifestyle in which many old habits need to be replaced by new ones. For example, youth find it difficult learning to pray when they have not been taught this growing up. Being spiritual is an expression of all of one's being just as faith is. It is associated with a life-long journey rather than an academic theory. The Christian faith is a practice of spirituality and this spirituality is our relationship to God, others, and oneself (Ackerman, 2001:19 & 135).

*Learning more about God's Word but also applying it, teaching others. You don't want to say I am a Christian but then not live the right life. So I understand faith development to be you practicing your faith.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*How much you have learned and what are you doing to implement what you are learning. Because the Bible says you are not only supposed to be hearers of the word, you are also supposed to be doers.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

Discipleship is the ministry that teaches young people the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. It also trains these youth about the practices relevant to develop as a Christian. It is patterned after the lifestyle of its teacher (Wilhoit, 2008:181 & 188). The heart of this form of discipleship is a disciple whose thoughts and actions are patterned after Christ. Discipleship feeds into spiritual formation as one grows as a Christian, one's initial approach to the Bible as a magical answer book changes to seeing the Bible as the source through which our lives and Christian character is transformed and strengthened. Migliore terms this as a mature hearing of Scripture (ibid: 241). This also includes opening oneself to the influence Scripture can have on one's life and also committing to doing so in the context of the faith community. As one grows in one's faith you become increasingly conscious of and sensitive to the needs of others (ibid: 244). These 'others' are the faith community with whom we partake in sacraments as a sign of our solidarity and also those who are not part of the Body of Christ but are in need of Him. This calls for a self-sacrificial attitude as a Christian.

d) Church has a role to play:

Faith development does not happen in isolation. It happens in relationship. The "church needs to have things in place for young people to grow". These things could take the form of a "mentorship or discipleship program". The church then becomes the nurturing space for "practising your faith".

*Developing their own understanding of the Gospel, their own understanding of who God is and how it is going to impact on their lives. And also teaching it in a way that they know that it impacts their whole lives and it is not just about coming to church... Well, because looking at EBC – just alone and some of the adults we have had interaction with, we see a lack of maturity and some of them don't even know why believe some of the things EBC believes or they think they believe. So it is important.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*They must understand what they supposed to be doing; they can choose the ones they are comfortable with. ... So we have all these things that we want to implement in order to help them in their spiritual maturity, some will do it and if they do it and they truly follow everything through, I believe there is no way they cannot grow. You can only go up if you commit yourself to do.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 4, P 1)

*A young person comes to the Lord or while they are in youth, there must be a mentorship/discipleship program that is going on, and that would enable them to develop in their faith, you know, to grow in their faith - mature. I think that's the outcome that everyone is looking for is maturity.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

*That they are more in the church....And go to youth*

(Int. 2, Cong. 7, R 1)

The EBCOSA's theological framework refers to discipleship as part of the process of spiritual growth. Discipleship, in the EBCOSA, was defined as total obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, as that obedience is worked out in all of life, not only in the spiritual realm (Matham, 2002: 116). The EBCOSA associates spiritual growth as part of discipleship as the process of learning with spiritual maturity as the ultimate goal. Discipleship promotes the Christian faith as the good news and not the fear, anxiety and self-hatred provoked by evangelistic propagations of the gospel. This good news teaches about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for which they are called to a relationship with God. The core of this process is to teach young people that God is sovereign and active in the world they live in and encounter daily. These youth need to own their faith through loving God, conversion, striving toward a Christian lifestyle and getting involved in their faith communities and world<sup>98</sup> (Groome, 1980: 49-51). Discipleship should help these youth live out the character of Christ rather than get as much knowledge about Christ that they can. Faith is not solely focussed on making meaning but on respond appropriately to God (in Dystra & Parks, 1986:56-57). It should be a faith that is relevant and adaptable to the varying challenges and contexts they may find themselves in. A faith that is not growing and practical makes these youth question its relevance for their lives. Discipleship helps young people understand the story of God and what their own role in God's story is (Folmsbee, 2007:42). These youth will learn how to deal with challenges and make sound choices through viewing their faith as an integral part of their lives. Spiritual growth happens through personal relationship and religious education empowers these relationships. Spiritually mmature adults can serve as mentors in conveying Christian values to young people (Maiko, 2007:166).

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<sup>98</sup> Groome emphasizes the importance of getting involved in socio-political and economic issues around us.

#### 4.4.1.1.1 Factors that enhance faith development of 14-17 years old youth (theme 2.3)

*What would you say are some of the contributing factors in developing your faith? (Name at least 3) Explain why you have listed these?*

As noted earlier, discipleship teaches young people the fundamental truths of the Christian faith and trains them how to develop as a Christian. This process is reliant on the lifestyle of the teacher. This question was posed to both youth and leadership. The following category of themes was derived in an attempt to find out what would help young people grow in their faith if they were saying they are not. It was not the researcher's intention to discover that the participants had far more responses to this category than the one below (hindrances). It was also surprising that not all the young people felt they were not growing in their faith as was initially assumed. This is elaborated on later. This category of themes proved that youth want to be actively involved in their faith formation. The supportive relationships and their personal attitudes are also important for their faith development.

##### a) Activities that help:

*What would you say would help you develop your faith?<sup>99</sup>*

As mentioned earlier, Christian activities are aimed at enabling young people to express their faith and not just mere works to keep them occupied. Reported activities that help 14-17 year old youth within the EBCOSA grow in their faith include; listening to "gospel music", "Bible reading...it gives me guidance and opportunities", "prayer" and "prayer meeting helps me understand the struggles of others", "going to church because it's important to have fellowship with God and others", "listening to pastor's preaching", "memorizing Scripture" and "personal Bible study". These activities coincide with those mentioned in chapter three and are usually the ones most prevalent when identifying oneself as a Christian. Nel and Thesnaar (2006:94) note that music (as a form of worshipping God) influences the formation of youth identity. They add that this is especially true in a South African context in which identity was previously measured by race but is now greatly influenced by the kinds of music youth listen to.

It was interesting that the younger leaders responded similarly to the youth with regards to the following section. The researcher found the next set of activities particularly interesting for young people because these reflect a certain depth that was not be expected

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<sup>99</sup> This question was added to clarify what the first was asking.

from these youth. Many of these young people found that “answers to prayers”, “applying God’s Word”, listening to “other’s experience and testimony”, “staying out of trouble”, “living out the Christian life...helps me stay away from bad things”, having a “proper interpretation of Scripture”, “understanding”, “speaking to people on own spiritual level”, “having contact with other churches” and “being interactive” through “telling others about faith”, “service” and “door-to-door” are all activities that help them grow in their faith. One other aspect that is especially important for church leadership to note is that young people also found “visitation” from and to older folk important to growing in their faith. These practices and the resources given them, enable them to have a language through which they express their relationship to Christ (Yust, et al, 2006:81). Ivy Beckwith argues that young people’s personal faith stories are often not taken seriously because these stories do not look like that of the adults. She adds that one’s faith story goes beyond a testimony to the articulation and ability to identify how God is active in one’s life on a daily basis. Youth need to be taught how to articulate their faith and encounters with God. An American study found that they could not explain their faith because no one taught them how to talk about their faith or provided opportunities to do so (Smith & Lundquist, 2005:26-29 & Dean, 2010:201-205). Young people should be helped in discovering and strengthening their trust in Jesus Christ. They need to understand that growing in faith takes time and they should be able to explore their faith in safe environments.

*Just spending time in God’s word. Like the more I spent time with him...it’s like I got a conviction that this is where I want to be.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 3, YL. 1)

*Prayer is very important...keeping that connection open with God, the relationship you have with God, he will always be. I know if I am not praying, then I am losing out on what I need to be doing with God. I know that if I am not praying and telling God I am going through this or this one in the youth has this problem, I will just forget what is happening in the ministry itself and in life... you should be reading your Bible. Learning more about what God says in his word. Obviously baptism. Being committed in church so that everyone knows what it means to be a Christian and how to live as a Christian.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*Well, definitely some doctrine, so a good bible based doctrine and good role models. Adults who are maturing as Christians and living out that faith on a daily basis...if you share your testimony or you share the Gospel with someone else that will help you to walk more carefully in front of those people you see because, if you start sharing obviously you need to read the word of God, you understand so you need to have a personal quiet time... sharing the Gospel that really alights the fires up within you so you become passionate about the things of the Lord*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*I have friends on Facebook that don't know a thing about the bible and I try my best to upload some Bible verses every day when I log onto Facebook.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*Bible study ...here at church and then the questions I have to ask and the support I get, they get to understand what I am going through, through the questions that I ask them. So even though you say hypothetically when you ask the question, they will know when it's not hypothetical... they sort of understand what I am going through and they answer me in a way that they know I understand. So bible study group first. Second the encouragement of others – in that way, encouragement from fellow believers and in that way I also get to encourage other people.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*Being interactive, like, I want to do the door to door*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*The Bible, youth, attending church, to pray every night... Because it teaches you about the Lord...Because I am communicating with God.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 7, R 1)

*Praying...Because you can ask Him like anything and at times he will answer your prayers like if you don't want it, but need it. And he like knows what is set in your heart... Worshipping God... It makes you, like, want to come into church and worship God. And I would say prayer meeting also... It is part of praying...If you come to prayer meeting, you will hear like different prayer requests and then they will say like what is happening in other people's lives which can also open up your eyes to see that not only you are sitting with problems – there are other people with worst conditions.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 1, R 1)

*Speaking to people about God. And what one can do and that He is always there for you, like to listen. He hears your prayers. And only He can help you come out of situations and will understand what you are going through... inviting people to come to church and let them learn the word. In some cases people, like, don't even know how to use the Bible. Because they sit at home and they don't even open their Bible and their Bible is there. And when they come to church then at least they, like, maybe when they sit with their Bible then they will know how to use it and read the verses... I am inviting them to come here and listen to the word of God so that they know what place I come to and to serve God and maybe they will come again when they see the atmosphere.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 1, R 1)

*I think we can join a prayer meeting. There we will also learn to pray for one another and how to pray and grow spiritually*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

*And I think if we do Bible studies and develop in God's word when we face trials and we found in situations God will help us if we know is word. Gotta have it in our hearts.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

*Fg cong 2, R 1 (youth): reading God's Word but also being interactive, like I must be able to interact with the pastor about God's Word, and, like, them with me. Practical involvement and so.*

*Fg cong 2, R 1 (youth): I also think reading in a group is better...Because maybe you are shy?*

*Interviewer: Do you as the young people feel that you are being taught how to read the Bible at church?*

*Fg cong 2, R2 (youth) : Yes...In most cases in the youth we also play games and we like those games – we prefer them and then I think something comparing, practical things to what is said in the Bible.*

*Fg cong 6, R 1 (youth): Anybody can come along and say 'you know what this is what the bible says'' and we didn't take time to read the Bible, so we will never know if they talking the truth or not.*

(Fg., Cong. 2)

Youth need to also be taught that these modes (disciplines) are not what make them righteous Christians; instead they are placed in a position to be drawn into Christ fully. The apostle Paul emphasized the importance of not becomes righteous Christians through these deeds at the expense of becoming Christ-like (Powell, et al, 2013:36; Wilhoit, 2008:45). Stage two of John Ackerman's (2001:30-39) five stages of spiritual growth is counter-dependence. This is the time when peers and other external voices create tensions between youth and their parents because young people want to gain independence from parents because they are forming a new identity in the new group they are in. This is evident through the disciples leaving all else to follow Jesus. This stage is followed by one of mutual competence in which they are expected to take on more responsibility. There is a sense of growing up yet also remaining dependant. Independence as stage four, teaches them to take responsibility for their own life and actions. The influential voices are no longer as active as before.

Young people want to know that they have something to offer and that other's appreciate their contribution. Through giftedness youth should be taught to discern what their talents and spiritual gifts are so that they will also not be so easily drawn into comparing themselves to their peers. When these gifts are shared with the body of Christ they learn to be hospitable Christians. They should be encouraged to reflect on their spiritual formation process by being

given the necessary safe spaces in which to do so. Through service, these youth become teachable and gain a genuine motivation for learning about God and His Word. Service enables opportunities for these youth to practice what they have learnt. These youth need to be equipped for the areas of service they are involved in so that they understand that their response is not obligatory but gospel orientated. It is important at this point to note that youth need to also learn about themselves and what they are capable and incapable of whilst being involved in ministry.

b) Supportive Relationships:

James Fowler (1996) looks at how developmental theorists have come to the conclusion that a child's faith and God-images are incorporated with their parents' ways of being. He surmises that as youth, God is emotionally associated with how they experienced relationships in early childhood. This gives one some indication as to how difficult relating to God could be if important relationships are not nurturing and supporting their faith. Having supportive relationships outside the home and also through parental involvement were two factors that enhance the faith development of 14-17 year old youth. The assertion that faith formation is the sole responsibility of the faith communities reinforces the problematic notion that different institutions have exclusive responsibility for different parts of young people's development. Strommen and Hardel (2000) note that there are varying role players the life of a young person. How faith is experienced within the home (family), the church and society (culture and community) is important for the faith formation of these youth. Faith formation process could also be hindered by these same role players (as is seen in the next section). Youth are shaped by their genetic make-up and influenced by their peers, neighbourhoods, schools, religious communities, and wider political and social contexts (Bunge, 2008:350). Each of these contexts transfer worldviews different to their familial or spiritual ones and each speak into the lives of these youth (Groome, 1980:123 -124).

i) Outside of the home:

This section includes having "(c)hristian friends at school because they can answer my questions and pray with me", having the voices of "others growing in Christ", "having pastor and youth leader to talk to", "(h)aving somebody to explain how to be a Christian. Someone who knows about Christianity", "having an accountability partner" and having an "older person's interest" in one's life. A surprising element was hearing how many youth considered the "pastor's encouragement" and "show(ing) interest in what youth are doing" as important.

Young people are constantly being fed so much information resulting in so many tough choices to be made. Having “answered questions and being willing to learn” also came up under this section. This then means that these answers are expected from the context of supportive relationships. Gaining “support through youth group” and having a “youth leader accountable for youth” was also noted here.

*If you have like more Christian friends it makes the Christian walk more easier for you. It just don't have to be like Fridays that you mix with those people. If you build relationships it makes your life easier in your Christian walk cos that's like only your friends for Friday and Monday you go back to your worldly friends. It a lot more difficult for the Christian walk. Cos now you have 4 days or 5, 6 days with worldly people and only one day with Christian people. It plays a big difference.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 3, YL. 1)

*Realizing that they always look up to you even if you don't realize it, so you always have to be an example to them and so your life is definitely impacted.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*And getting response from people, is the only way you can measure. Ask the question and hope you get an honest answer – you know, how is my temper, how is my patience, have I been more patient, you know... you will have to have a friend that is blatantly honest with you, don't judge you but help you in that area. So I think you will have to identify and put people in place to ask you the difficult questions. Because if you do ask yourself those questions you might just justify reactions in your own mind.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*Having other fellow Christians around you who gives you support and encourage you. As I have said pastor \*<sup>100</sup> and aunty \* have been a big part of my life because they have really helped me grow because they understand what it is like being a young person and all of the temptations that we go through and they help – like every morning they send me a message with a bible verse, so that helps me grow as well. So I sort of like meditate on what they have sent me. And I read more about it in my Bible as well. So that is one of the contributing factors, and basically once you have also learned, also encouraging other people – like, I have friends who are saved; well one isn't so me and my other friends also help her as well. So we try and speak to her about being saved. So basically just trying to do the best you can do.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*Staying out of trouble...Helps me to go to church. And to youth – because people do that...Pastor...Encouraging me to come.*

(Int.1, Cong. 7, R 1)

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<sup>100</sup> Excluded actual names for sake of confidentiality.

*Some people tend to ok not everyone but, there are like some people that they feel like they can't do it alone. And they always need someone else to encourage them so that's the reason why I say you always have a partner with you because you know like if I have a friend and my friend is a Christian as well she is going to encourage me to do things more for the Lord and what she does will impact on my life as well. And I will try and implement being more like her. Because if she's a stronger person and I'm a weaker person then she can like grow on me and make me stronger...accountability partner*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

Youth need to be encouraged to look for friendships in which they can be spiritually enriched. They need to position themselves in the ministries their faith community offers (small group, youth group, Prayer meetings, etc.) for these relationships to happen. Synthetic-conventional faith begins during early adolescence through the development of abstract thinking (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 29-30; Fowler, 1987: 63- 67). This enables them to value the abstract experiences and expressions of faith that they encounter. Through deepening relationships with non-familial members one begins seeing the self as the other sees you. This is applicable to all the significant relationships the youth has (at school, on sports field, at home, in church, et al). This stage is correlated with identity formation in which all perceptions of self should be integrated with personal beliefs, morals and perceptions of self. Personality becomes a conscious concern at this stage (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 29; Fowler, 1987:65). This fragile stage brings with it a strong need to maintain close connections with others and also a need to differentiate one's self from others. There is an intense desire and need to feel included. Young people should be helped in discovering and strengthening their trust in Jesus Christ. They need to understand that growing in faith takes time and they should be able to explore their faith in safe environments. Young people are usually admonished to 'be quiet' or 'stay still' in attempts to silence their voices and diminish the effects of their presence. These views and forms of silence complicate and inhibit the exercise of youthful agency. This silence could lead to youth feeling disconnected from the faith community (Hyde et al, 2010:97). Engaging youth constructively through creating safe spaces for questioning and expressing fears and doubts is of greater impact than setting up rules and structures. Faith is nurtured by what congregations teach through its various ministries (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 77). Faith communities should serve as the safe spaces in which its' youth experiences the realities of being Christian. These realities include trials and also the blessings that Christians experience. Young people are searching for adults who are authentic in how they live their faith. Authenticity enables them to see other Christians in the good and tough times in their lives. The more faithful our communities are the more likely it is that younger members would develop and experience an authentic faith (Groome,

1980:122). Older adults should serve as mentors in conveying Christian values to young people (Maiko, 2007:166).

ii) Involvement of parents:

The following extracts show that young people do not only want to have the support of their parents but also their active involvement is their faith formation. Postmodern society has influenced the home in such a way that parents do not make time to invest in their children's emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Spiritual formation and passing on Christian values are left to the schools and the Christian organizations they attend (Powell, et al; Smith & Denton, et al). "(R)elationship with parents", "family influence", "support of parents", "obedience to parents", "trust, respect, relationship" and "parents should be involved" are all voices saying that parents should not merely present but active participants in their children's faith.

*It depends on the kind of family you come from.: I could say some Christian families if they maybe have a child or whatever, then maybe she gets pregnant and the community respects me and my family and I am a Christian family, I might get embarrassed.*

Fg cong 2, R1 (youth)

*I grew up in a Christian home, my dad was in church and my mum all their lives, but that did not make me a Christian, you understand what I'm saying. I took it from there, that you know what people can see me as a Christian knowing that my parents are, I grew up in that home, but the friends at night would know that I'm not a Christian.*

Fg Cong 6, R 2 (youth)

When a young person's identity is reciprocated within the circle of those they value, they will also work at adopting a set of attitudes, beliefs and values that will link them to those whom their faith and values depend on. This is most likely, their family or peers. Protestants also value the influence of the family and faith community, storytelling and worship as important for the faith formation of its youth but traditional focus of family interaction is fading. The busyness of parents and youth do not allow for consistent interaction resulting in these youth taking longer to form their Christian identities. As noted in the extracts above, youth do not inherit Christianity because they are in a Christian family. They do, however, need the support and consistency of their parents as they wrestle with their faith. Youth feel alone as they try to sort who they are without parental support (Powell, 2013:54). African culture places much respect on the role of families when it comes to raising young people

because faith nurturing by the church starts at the family level and goes to the schools and ends at church services (Maiko, 2007:58). Families have extraordinary power to shape the lives of their youth because parents are essential actors in their faith journey (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 7). The conversations and stories parents and grandparents tell about God should be so contagious that it motivates youth to have a relationship with God (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 77). This means that modelling in the home becomes crucial. How parents act, use their time, talk and commit themselves models the values they hold. Parents should also share their testimonies and allow spaces for discussion about the faith in their homes. This enables youth to vent matters they are uncertain on in a safe space.

c) My attitude:

Faith becomes realised as truth and trust once tested by suffering and trials. Thus, learning to see God in increasingly adequate ways is crucial to faith. For this reason, one's understanding of faith cannot be separated from the reality of betrayal, suffering, fear and even amazement. Attitude plays a crucial role in how life is approached. The attitude of the youth during their faith formation has surfaced as an important contributing factor to enhancing their faith. The researcher is in awe of the voices of the young people interviewed. They noted "God not answering immediately", "knowing what is right and wrong", "facing trials", "taking responsibility for my choice", "obedience to leadership", having my "focus on God" and being "open-minded about others' faiths" as important attributes of a godly attitude. One participant added that one "must firstly believe there is a God to communicate with God". I cannot stress how much this level of commitment took me by surprise.

*I think you will have to do some introspection. Because if you don't measure it, evaluate where you are as a person... you have to zero in to that situations that repeats itself in your life*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*... probably like situations in which we find ourselves when it's difficult and it seems as if God is far away not listening to our prayers. I think that it when we really our faith gets tested. When we newly saved and then God will always answer your small little petty prayers because he wants to show you that he is real and then eventually as you grow stronger God is going to distance himself eventually so that when we really have to test our faith and that kinda develops it... sometimes when you prayer for something and God knows you don't really need it he's not going to answer you at that moment so he distance himself. But that is when you really have to believe that He does still exist. You know God is always there for you and that is just his way of testing your faith and seeing how strong a Christian you are... So maybe the thing that you want is not really what's best for your life so he's going to make you*

*wait and you going to have to faith and believe that he still does exist he's just distancing himself from you*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

*Facing trials. I think that's another thing. When you know you ask God you know I'm a Christian so why do I have to go through you know when I started out as a Christian I thought things were not going to be you know God was always going to be and works things out for me. Then I eventually realized that just as Jesus suffered we have to suffer as well and that's you know when you face trials you really have to know that God is going to work things out for you, you just going to have to eventually to keep your faith and keep praying and that's how it is.. I've tried it, it's kinda maybe I should just bail on it and yet you say I need to actually grow and develop, I need to suffer through it then I'll come out and then grow.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

*Focusing our lives I think. Focusing our lives and just making God our number one and just focusing what we a really are here for like determining our purpose and focusing on what really should be doing on this earth. You know, creating an eagerness to know more about his word or just to grow spiritually.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

The more one discovers the more one realises that there is still so much more to learn about God. The mystery of faith is encountered in daily life and the circumstances these youth find themselves in. It is in the raw ordinary details of life as it happens. In order to own their faith, youth should take the responsibility of growing in their faith upon themselves and not shift this to the adults in their lives even though a relational theology is necessary. Youth need to experience and understand God and His activity in their lives on a daily basis. They are capable at this stage in their lives of committing to an authentic relationship with Christ if they experience God active in their life situations (Maiko, 2007:15). Youth workers should empower these youth with a faith they can take with them for the rest of their life journey (Folmsbee, 2007:41) and not one that is only suitable for a certain time and context. It should be a faith that is relevant and adaptable to the varying challenges and contexts they may find themselves in. They will learn how to deal with challenges and make sound choices through viewing their faith as an integral part of their lives. It is also important to note at this point that church leaders (pastors, mentors & parents) should not assume that because youth use the correct terminology and comply with all the traditional rules, they are being positively formed in their faith (Setran & Kiesling, 2013:33). External conformity can be masked to look as though these youth conform but they are actually seeking approval and recognition within the church. Leaders who are happy with external behaviour do not easily notice this masked

compliance. Setran & Kiesling (2013: *ibid*) reference the conformity of the older son in the story of the prodigal son of the Bible as such conformity. He remained close to the Father yet worshipped the throne in silence. It is the church's responsibility to assist young people in noticing and acknowledging specific personal idols that could distract them from fully worshipping God. The challenge is that Christianese and consistent church attendance has become part of their identity already. Explanation and discussion of the modes of faith formation and reasons thereof through the safe spaces mentioned earlier and Christian mentors would also serve helpful in this instance.

Church attendance was mentioned at several places in the interviews. In an effort to confirm the commitment of these youth (in some physical way), they were also asked about how often they attend church, whether; once or twice a month, every week or not often. This was followed by asking whether this attendance has been by choice or out of obligation. This question is placed under attitude because how these youth respond to church obligations also portrays some aspects of their attitudes toward their faith. The following responses could support this;

*I come all the time because I help with the Sunday school. I am a Sunday school teacher. So I have to be here. And it is a lot of fun – I like to be here. Something feels empty out of the week when I don't come to church, so.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*(Interviewer) Ok. What stops you from going to church? You said you don't go often. I understand that. But what then stops you?*

*(Respondent) Just being lazy... Because I would say on Saturday I want to go to church and then when I wake up, I don't want to go to church. There is some stuff that stops me from going to church... (like) My motorbike and fishing. Because that is what I normally do on Sundays.*

(Int.1, Cong. 7, R 1)

*I chose to be here. I came here in 2009. And then I first like attended church so see how things are and the people here was very welcoming and stuff like that and that's why I decided to join the church.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

An authentic relationship with God can be exhibited through having learnt to live amidst the tensions of their faith community and not leaving because they are in a phase of questioning. They need a third-person perspective in which the opinions, evaluations and expectations of others are also taken into consideration. These other voices into the young

person's life can assist them in gaining their own (Fowler, 1987:69). Even young people who attend church regularly and are confessing Christians know very little about their faith traditions, and have difficulty perceiving or articulating the relation between faith and their daily lives. It is important that the faith of these youth is not confused with gaining adult approval. Adults generally approve of those who portray younger versions of themselves and mistake 'conformative' faith for a mature faith. A mature faith is expressed by a young person who structures their developing selfhood around a view of God, a religious community, a sense of call, and an eternal hope (Dean, 2010: 53). This statement presupposes that the young person takes responsibility for not only their faith but their lifestyle as well. Youth are agents of their own development and need consistent messages that support their healthy development (Quinn, 2008:76). Youth need to embrace this as part of their faith journey realizing that how one develops as a Christian is an on-going process in which the young person deepens, expands and reconstitutes their faith several times along their faith journey (in Dykstra & Parks 1986:40 & Fowler, 1987:37).

#### 4.4.1.2.4 Factors that hinder faith development of 14-17 years old youth (theme 2.4)

*What would you say hinders the faith development of young people? Why? (Leadership)/  
What would you say hinders (makes it difficult) your faith development? (Youth)*

Youth (in the EBCOSA) are not placed as priority in preaching sermons, evangelism or discipleship. They are not given opportunity to exercise the gifts and talents they have within the church (on a consistent basis) context because they are said to be 'the church of tomorrow'. Some youth have no consistent spiritual example to follow. As noted above, this empirical study uncovered more enhancement (contributing) factors than hindering factors. The overarching factor in this theme would be that a "lack of positive influence" is what ultimately makes it difficult for the youth in this study to grow in their faith. This lack of positive influence can be seen in five different places, namely; peer pressure, being rejected, unsaved<sup>101</sup> family, Christians who pretend and not finding answers in the Bible. It should be noted that the amount of themes does not negate the impact each of these have on the young person. Each of these areas is really crucial to one's faith formation and failure to address these can lead to a breakdown in the faith formation of these youth.

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<sup>101</sup> Unsaved here implies that one has not believed in and personally accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ and is thus not a Christian.

*The group here - A lot of them have different problems that they go through. So when they are focusing on their own problems and stuff, it does hinder them actually. Because some of them just feel that God is never going to be able to help me. And so focusing on the problems that we have, hinders their faith.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

Wilhoit (ibid: 33) believes that youth (and adults) are not growing in their faith because the gospel is not placed as the primary influence behind congregational formational programs. Faith formation through Christian religious education is the role of the church and is aimed at helping young people grow in their faith. This task involves making the gospel easily accessible to young people in way that addresses their spiritual needs and human challenges they face (Groome, 1980:73).

a) Friends/Peer pressure:

Having “unsaved friends” and “when your friends at school and home are different” was reported as hindrances to the faith of these youth. The participants of this study noted; “worldly things like drinking, smoking, sex, drugs, having abortions”, “temptation”, “boring church”, friends “asking questions” and “fear” as areas that explain the peer pressures they face. The notion that “other religions cause doubts” in one’s mind was a new form of pressure that emerged. Many young people stated that they “don’t want to force anyone” to believing what they believed. This idea correlates with the study conducted in America by Christian Smith (2005:26-29). This study revealed that these youth experience a multiplicity of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices and also identities. Another pressure young people are facing today is that from “competing activities like sport and school” with those activities from home and church. Now this may not seem like peer pressure as we traditionally know it but not being involved in school and sport activities can bring with it a sense of peer pressure if they have friends who are involved in these. Most weekends are being filled with extra-curricular activities and sports. This has resulted in youth not getting involved in the activities the church has to offer.

*Friends, the wrong kind of friends... you around only unbelievers. It’s more difficult to grow in your spirit or in faith than it is like when you around believing people. So unbelieving friends and family. Family judges you from where you coming...They always bring up your background. If there’s no people showing interest in you they feel like why must I do this if no one cares?*

(Int. 3, Cong. 3, YL. 1)

*There is the problem with teen pregnancies, sex before marriage, drugs, ja*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*A lot of peer pressure because I think we have less and less of young people making a stand for the gospel and so the few that are there, are not...*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*Peer pressure... people have this sort of criteria in which you are supposed to live when you are a Christian. There are things they say you are not supposed to do and it is usually the non-believers who tell you all of these things and they don't know what the bible has to say about them. So that is one of the things that make it hard.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*Bad friends...Because if you want to go to youth, they will say no, let's go do something else.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 7, R 1)

*Peer pressure will be stealing my faith from me. Maybe the fact that I won't be able to read my bible because I'll be going out with my friends than reading and spending time with God... the one moment you can be so holy and then your friends come along and they totally boggled your mind. You forget about everything, all the good and just focus on the bad. And I think that is actually like one of the things the devil like really he can really work in people to work within you. Sometimes people don't see you as such a person doing wrong things but the all of a sudden you going with that group and going with the flow. That's how quick the devil can take it away from you, your faith.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

*FG – C6, R 1 (youth): temptation or something cause you get those times you when you know it's wrong and you know you not supposed to do it and you go against your principles. But because of, like, it also goes with peer pressure, so then, you actually fall into that.*

*R2 (youth): Maybe it's because you just wanna be seen, because it's the norm.*

*FG – C6, R 3 (youth): It's more nicer to speak to your friends than to mother; because you know with your mother you must respect her. With your friends you can speak slang, go on, actually. And also you know, socialising, like for instance umm, you hear like someone older, like the Pastor share his story, like what he did in the past. You know, you can change your life be like him, he is like an example to us... in a way your Christian friend can also, when you are about to do it can be like "hey, we just talked about that, what you doing, stop doing that"*

(Fg., Cong. 6)

Many of the extracts above reveal that youth and also leaders associated negative peer pressure with negative behaviours (pregnancy, drugs, not having a stand for the gospel and

not spending time with God). The focus group revealed a deeper hindrance; that of evading personal principles to please others and not confiding in parents because of a fear of being disrespectful. This is closely tied to the next section. An important part of faith formation is helping young people discern between the tension between dominant societal culture and that of the faith community. Societal culture dominates these young minds because its messages and teaching is found wherever they go. They try to remain loyal to participating in the rituals, practices and beliefs of the faith community but find themselves living out what society and family teaches them. Young people need the example of Christ-like adults in their lives to discern what is beneficial to their faith and what not. If this is not evident in their lives the option to abandon faith through separation becomes more attractive (Yust, 2004: 39-40). Faith formation among youth should help them realize their need for God but also help them weigh up the costs involved (Setran & Kiesling, 2004: 37).

b) Being rejected:

“(G)ossip”, “feeling left out”, “mockery” and “wanting to fit in” are all emotions describing youth who feel rejected. Sadly, this rejection has not been limited to peers but includes even rejection from the church. Participants noted not having “transport to church and youth group”, “leaders not passionate about young people” and the church placing “focus on the petty things youth do” as ways they feel rejected. This rejection has even extended to God when they constantly face “unanswered prayers”. Feeling rejected is an emotive thing yet it seems to have so many ways in which it is exhibited. Each of these ways could end up hindering the faith formation of young people. The real danger is that these could easily go without being noticed.

*...temptation outside. Like your friends will tell you, “Just smoke this cigarette once”, but like it’s not in me to do that, you know. And then I will tell them no. Or like some people will say like brag like “I was drinking” or so and then you think like why must you brag about something like that... If everyone is like talking about it. And it is as if you now like also want to try. But in the end then I think it is not really worth it. In some cases like Muslim children will tell Christians do you believe in that nonsense? Then you will tell them but it is not nonsense but then they will just say it is.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 1, R 1)

*Fg cong 2, (pastor): Very seldom do you find a young person who messed up as far as their sexuality is concerned coming back after being (unclear) and saying I have messed it up. Very few will do that. Because of the way the church handles that. Because they feel too embarrassed with their situation.*

*...We need to put structures in place, we are messing up but there is hope for you to be restored and to start living for God. Because they are going to be mothers, help them to be a good partner, help them to be the support in the context of girlfriends, parents and taking responsibility for their actions basically... I think why we zero in, because it is something public is because sex is not a sin – your body has been made up to have sexual desires – you wouldn't be normal if you don't have them. But what makes it awkward, is because in Gods eyes sex is good and sex is beautiful if you are a husband and wife. ..And at the end of the time it will depend where you are at that time with God. Because you can be a strong Christian and have a moment of weakness at that time but unfortunately that weakness have life- long consequences. That is what makes sex so – that people look that so because you have desires..., the church accepting the young people for who they are. This would help the young person also accept themselves for who they are. But if there is a constant focus on what is wrong with them instead of what is right with them, they will also focus on those negative things and that will not bring stability in their lives. For some it may take just one person showing them and for others it may take years. We need to start to think in that way, they will benefit in that way and it will place the church in a healthy position if we could teach the young kids to be themselves and not judge them. And try to steer them. Because I mean you can hear all the sermons in the world but it is all about what you are going to do about it. It will not solve all the problems in life, but if you can get to that place of accepting yourself as someone that God will never reject. Someone that God will always embrace irrespective of popular opinion about you. That should give you a bit of confidence into making your decisions.*

*Fg cong 2, R3 (Youth): Before you think about sex, you have to think about the consequences. Falling pregnant or getting HIV or whatever.*

*Interviewer: Is it easy to love ourselves?*

*R2 (youth): Yes*

*R3 (youth): Not for everyone*

*Interviewer: You are saying yes, why?*

*R2 (youth): If you really know where you are coming from and where you are now, then it is easy. And when you know how to draw the line. And you know what is wrong and what is right. Although it can sometimes be difficult... most times we blame God and not realizing that it is out of your own.*

(Fg, Cong. 2)

A longer extract was deemed necessary here because the researcher wanted to expound on how the issue of teenage pregnancy in the EBCOSA has led to so many youth feeling rejected by Christ and leaving the church and most times the faith. Churches have not been including young people in its faith narratives. The sexual development of teenagers is one of the most important areas of their journey into adulthood and can easily be influenced by media messages on sex and sexuality. This behaviour could be demonstrating a misconception on sex and sexuality that these youth and its leaders have. Many young people's lives are shaped in contexts in which a variety and diversity of choice and lifestyle is offered. This further indicates how moral values on sexual matters are shaped and how

youngsters make these choices based on personal preference (Cloete, 2012: 1-2). In listing a few reasons as to why an increasing number of South African youth are having sex before marriage, Mashau (2011:3) notes that these youth are doing so for the sake of gaining self-esteem and to gain popularity amongst their peers. He adds that there is a growing trend amongst African young people these days to think that it is old-fashioned if they do not experiment with sex before marriage. They think that it is part and parcel of modernity to engage in sex before marriage. Engaging youth constructively through creating safe spaces for questioning and expressing fears and doubts is of greater impact than setting up rules and structures.

### C) Unsaved family:

Most young people aged 14-17 years old, are still living with their parents or guardians. The family are the people whom they spend most of their time with. Much of the learning takes place instinctively through family traditions and rituals. When “young people are not disciplined at home” they begin acting out rebelliously outside the home as well. Being “rude (and) back chatting” to parents filters down to other adults in their lives. One of the major challenges a young person developing in their faith can face is, “having non-Christian family” in which they have “unsaved parents”. Having a family who does not believe the same thing the young person does creates a constant tension between what they have learnt at home and what they are experiencing in their faith journey in different contexts. Despite popular opinion saying that youth do not want authoritative voices in their lives, having “no adult supervision” has also showed itself as detrimental.

*The problems that they face are big like parents problems – they worry about what are their families going through, are their families ok, and would they be able to see their families again, is my mother getting beat or. Drinking problems, the father is drinking. So family problems – family in general*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*It starts at home. That is where everything starts unfortunately there is not family alters at our homes, therefore our young people doesn't really learn a lot, you know, even, when I say learn a lot, just have the basic understanding of this is what I must to do, I must read my Bible, I must pray to the Lord, so there, it starts there. By the time it comes to the church they are already influenced in a way that they are very sluggish, even when you try to. But you can see the difference of those who have family alters and those who don't. The ones that have family alters are a little more sensitive to the word of God, but those who don't it's like talking to a wall*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*... having family members who are not saved, is a problem. Because my parents are not saved. It is just me and my brother. And it is usually a problem some times. Although they really support us – they allow us to come to youth and bible study and church. It is like, they don't want to be involved, so ja – that makes it a bit hard... They don't understand that if you put church first and your faith first, then everything else will follow and will work for you good eventually in the end. So it makes it hard, because they make us do things that Christians are not supposed to do. Like for instance, my father drinks. So he would send us to the shop and we are uncomfortable with that but because they are our parents we have to do it... And knowing that they might not make it to heaven is a problem. So I pray for them... I don't care what my friends have to say anymore. It is my parents now.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*Maybe your parents if they are unsaved...if they are now drinking and stuff, then it like breaks you down...Because I mean it is like around you every day. So it just stays there. Even when you try to get away from it, it will always be there.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 1, R 1)

Families, not the church, must be seen as the backbone of spiritual and moral formation of youth (Strommen, 1998:177–178). Parents need to understand that faith formation takes place with their children and not for them (Roehlkepartain in Yust, 2004: xii). Families can prepare children for this life in Christ by telling biblical stories as relevant for their stories, celebrating one's faith as life in abundance, talking to each other, discussing challenges and faithful service towards each other and others (Caldwell in Yust, et al, 2006:328). The challenge is that most parents do not talk to their children about faith, this includes Christian parents. Christian parents want to pass their faith onto their children but do not know how (Roehlkepartain in Yust, 2004: xi). Families need to understand their own spirituality and nurture it in order to assist their children. This does not mean that all conversations between youth and their parents should evolve around issues about their faith. Parents could also take time to share how they are experiencing their faith and this includes the challenges they face or have faced and how they have dealt with these. It should be emphasized that involvement in good works at the expense of sharing one's faith at home can be detrimental to the faith formation of youth as two separate messages are communicated. Like Israel, parents are still called to be the primary custodians of the faith (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 97). This means that modelling in the home becomes crucial. How parents act, use their time, talk and commit themselves models the values they hold. Parents should also share their testimonies and allow spaces for discussion about the faith in their homes. Becoming gospel-orientated parents, communicating moral values, being involved in service activities and sharing one's faith at home are all contributing factors in one's faith formation.

Parents who are gospel-orientated place emphasis on studying the Word of God and on relationships rather than rules. These parents are intentional about their own spiritual growth and the growth of their children's faith as well. In the case of non-Christian families; the church should help families prepare their youth for a life in Christ by helping parents understand their spiritual formation and the role it plays in the lives of their children. In this way, church and home become a partnership in nurturing the spiritual growth of these youth. Families have extraordinary power to shape the lives of their youth because parents are essential actors in their faith journey (Strommen & Hardel, 2000: 7).

d) "Christians who pretend"

Participants in this study noted that "inauthentic Christians at church" and "the older people not setting the example by not being respectful to one another" as reason for not growing in their faith. Access to information today is so easy. Cyber relationships have become the norm in many people's lives. Despite all these voices, young people are still in search of guidance from the adults in their lives. They are also looking for genuine relationships on which they can rely when challenges and trials arise. Having a Christian community that are not true to what they profess makes remaining focussed on their faith difficult. The temptation to also live inconsistent lives is greater. Youth are looking for people who they can trust and look up to. Not having this can be a big stumbling block.

*The really older people usually look down on the youth. Like they are staunch and they must realise times have changed.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 3, YL. 1)

*One of the major ones can be when people older in the faith don't live for God. That is one of the major things that I have a problem with. Because we do have immature Christians that has been walking with God for years but as far as their spiritual growth is concerned has not grown an inch. And young people come into the church and because they are older in age and besides the years being in the church, you expect that those are people you can learn from. That is a major hindrance in the church. When you speak to young people about the dangers of smoking and you have that someone who is battling with smoking in your church, you cannot put the two together. I think that is the major hindrance. Besides that I think opportunities for those who do flourish, to be active in church.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*Coming out of families where parents profess to be Christians but are not living what they are professing. And even in communities where you see neighbours, people that you know who you see on a Sunday worshipping or leading worship or doing things, but you see how they live during the rest of the week.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*And like in the church if there's like the one or many parties that don't like you and then you coming to church and thinking like I'm just coming to church why should I look at other people around me and what they say. So that can also hinder me from coming to church cos what if I feel now know that one is speaking about me and this one is speaking about me why should I come to church? But we don't come to look at other people we come to church to listen to the message actually.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

*... especially if you are new in a church and you just come here. You expect people you know you want people to show you how this is done. You really want people to lead you and kinda just show you the way but when they leading you astray you kinda just say why must I get saved when this is what Christians really do? I mean when you visit a church everything just seems all right but once you involved in a ministry and actually working with the people that's when you really see ok so this is how it is but you eventually realize that people can do what they want but God says he will build his church and we have to just stick in there no matter what people say or do.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

*FG – C6, R 1 (youth) Things like, people leaving the church on a Sunday and immediately lighting a cigarette outside, has come up in three churches. The example of older people not coming to actually greet younger people...it is a bit of a difficult thing for the older folk to change...there is a gap between there generation and our generation and I would put mainly the blame on our generation and not so much on their generation. Speaking from my own personal opinion is that we intend to go into this group of I don't want to... look, listen you too young, you cannot come up... or you can't do what I do.. And that's where the problem came in and the gap became bigger and bigger and bigger... and some of the individuals who tried to mend that gap it became such a huge gap that its unrepairable at this stage... it's about the older folk passing on the wisdom that we've gained to them before the make that ir-rechangeable or irreparable mistake that some of us has made, in the future, in the past sorry and we started.*

(Focus group, Cong. 6)

The church can assist its members through the five stages of growth through teaching them to prayer and also listen (stage one); assigning them with a sponsor or mentor or group (stage two); allowing them space to be alone (stage three); creating spaces where questions can be asked (stage four) and assigning them to be sponsors or mentors (stage five) (Ackerman, 2001:34). Teachings about faith should be taught and modelled as relational and applicable to how these youth view God which allows a process of meaning-making. The confirmation that young people are created in God's image and that their creation is perfectly good should be a guiding notion (Maiko, 2007:15).

e) “not finding answers in the Bible”

One of the common practices encouraged for a new Christian is that of regular Bible reading. This practice has been motivated as a form of guidance from God through His Word. When youth feel that they do not understand this Bible or are “not finding answers in the Bible”, they become discouraged in their faith. How the Bible is read and explained to these youth is important.

*... when I was newly saved we did the study of assurances like the assurance of prayer and forgiveness but I didn't really, there was lots of questions that was unanswered and like for a Christian I was still young. I had a lots of questions that I still wanted to be answered but I didn't really get a chance to ask to you know ask people because I was afraid they are going to think look at this silly girl asking me these silly questions but you know its questions I really wanted to be answered.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 3, R 1)

Youth in the moratorium phase are questioning the faith narrative they had inherited from their family as they encountered the new material from outside influences. An important attribute of faith when working with young people is that faith is open to questioning. It is through this uncertainty that faith is matured. Making connections and identifying relationships between the different parts of life is what makes one human. St. Augustine, Anselm, Karl Barth and Martin Luther are among the well-known theologians who advocated that faith cannot be separated from inquiry (questioning). True faith should not be confused with fideism (belief without questioning). Inquiry is incumbent of developing a mature faith. One needs to constantly ask for clarification on God's understanding of the different situations one finds oneself in. It is the mystery that invites the questioning and exploring of one's faith that is so crucial to finding an owned faith. The more one discovers the more one realises that there is still so much more to learn about God.

#### 4.4.1.2.5 Opinions on personal growth (theme 2.5)

*Do you think you are developing in your faith? (Youth)/ Do you think the young people (14-17 yrs. old) of EBCOSA are developing in their faith? Why? /Why not? (leadership)*

At the backdrop of what the participants understood Christianity and faith development to be, enquiry into whether they felt they were growing in their faith was made. Answering questions about their faith does not imply that they are experiencing their faith this

way. The researcher wanted to establish whether participants experienced what she initially assumed (that they are not growing) or not and in this way report unbiased feedback. Once again faith as being affective, active and part of one's being came to the fore. It is interesting that these components were evident for those who felt they are growing in their faith as well as those who felt they are not.

a) Yes, growing because:

i) Emotionally I feel, as though I "have an eagerness to study God's word". Knowledge and understanding of the Bible has also helped young Christians feel confident. "I'm not shy anymore" is not a statement to be taken lightly for a young person (bearing the earlier connection to feeling rejected in mind). Rejection makes being confident about whom you are in Christ difficult as the tendency is to always shy away from what you believe and also getting involved. Complete separation from things that distracted participants from their relationship with God was also voiced as helpful, "I don't associate with worldly music...listen to gospel only".

ii) What I do and see being done:

The same Christian activities noted as being a Christian surfaced as reasons why participants felt they are growing in their faith. "(A)nswered prayers", "church involvement and baptism", "church attendance and AWANA", "Bible study", "prayer meeting", "songs in praise and worship make sense...I understand what worship is now" and "reading my Bible helps me understand what God is doing in my life" were all reasons given for why youth feel they are growing in the faith. An important part of forming one's Christian identity is being able to actively experience what it feel like giving back and getting involved in the church. Youth have energy and zeal that should be channelled into their Christian lifestyles as would have been the case in a non-Christian lifestyle.

*I think they are, but slowly... We do a lot of testimony time. Time where we can share on what has been happening in your life and is God pushing you to speak to someone about being a Christian? A lot of them would speak about at school how they have a friend that they could have told but they didn't and they feel they should have told but they haven't and how they feel.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*I think they are...I see the presence of young people at our annual events or our national events has increased over the past few years and I think that shows what is happening at our churches at home... I can see that something healthy is happening because they are feeding the conference with young people*

*that would like to come to conference. You cannot judge their motives, but they are there, but they are sitting there under good ministry and they are exposed to the national church.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*I realized that it is not just about coming to church alone. It is basically about reading your Bible so you know more about what the bible has to say and Gods will for your life, so basically I have grown in that way, because when I am confused about a certain situation, I pray about it. I pray more now than I used to before because at times I would forget to pray. And now I read my bible more and also being a Sunday school teacher... I know more now than I have known before.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*Yes...Because I didn't go to church before and I didn't go to youth.*

(Int.1, Cong. 7, R 1)

*Yes... Like when singing, the words actually makes sense man. When you praise and worship. And at least you will know like what it is about... Like, I understand what is praising Him and worshipping Him. Before I wouldn't think like it is that...I do spiritual dancing also. It also shows you that you can dance with Christ also – not only without Him.*

(Int.3, Cong. 1, R 1)

*I am growing spiritually in the faith because I'm trying to implement what's God's word in my life, like I'm in Sunday school. I'm attending youth now and we doing a Bible study so and like when we come here on a Friday night then we will like say. We need to say our favourite Bible scripture or maybe your scripture for the week. Or whatever devotions you like do. So then you like give that and say how the Lord intervened in your life, not only in your life in the week. So that is also helping me grow cos now I like read my Bible, I memorize verses and things. So we need to like come to youth and say like what the Lord has done for us.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 3, R 1)

### **iii) Who I am (being):**

A big advantage of knowing who you are in Christ and being able to identify yourself as such is confidence. This confidence helps youth “say no to evil without feeling bad”, “implement God’s Word”, “spend time with God”, “ask for help”, “believe in new things”, “realize the importance of being a Christian” and “know(ing) what the Bible says”. As a result of this confidence “I am able to discern what God wants and this changes my behaviour” to the extent that even “my parents see the change in me”. Having parents voice these changes also strengthens their youth when they have to go out into the world.

*Yes...Because I believe in Jesus and I read the Bible more often.*

(Int. 2, Cong. 7, R 1)

b) No, I'm not growing because:

i) The influences in my life:

“(L)ack of positive parental influence”, “lack of education” and “youth leaders are not involved in our lives” can make growing in your faith difficult. Having no positive influences and also not being equipped to live out one’s faith can be reason for youth to not take their faith seriously.

*I don't think so... The youth leader needs to play the role of parents, to be their role model and so on and a lot of youth leaders don't really play that role as well...many young people come out of homes where their parents are not faithful and it leaves it up to the youth leader to perform much of that role but many youth leaders are not taking that role seriously.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 1, YL 1)

ii) What I do and see being done:

The doctrine of grace is vital to every young person’s faith formation. An understanding of what grace means empowers youth to move beyond regret and guilt for what they have not done well enough to be a Christian. Grace separates performance from the qualifications for being a Christian. Youth believe in an all or nothing lifestyle. It’s either you are genuine in your faith or you are not, and when “I have done bad things and am not doing anything to change it” this disqualifies me from being this genuine Christian. Youth then resort to feeling as though they have tried this lifestyle but it does not suite them.

*Very few seem to have much knowledge of the bible and were able to hold discussion or conversations regarding some of the key principles.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

iii) Emotionally I feel:

Nothing! I do not feel any connection to God or anyone connected to him.

*They demonstrate a rebellious spirit, they very sluggish when it comes to spiritual things. They only hyped up when its superficial things, the things that doesn't really matter its temporary pleasures. That's the only things that move them, it's sad that our young people can walk in and out of church, not only in this church, but I'm saying, the whole EBCOSA, we have this problem where people will not sit when the word of God being preached they have no regard for the word at all*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

#### 4.4.1.3 Category 3: Participants suggestions on how to address the research problem

*What would you say could be put in place by the denomination? (Leaders)*

Thematic analysis is an inductive approach to data analysis. Data is obtained from participants under the assumption that they have a valuable voice to offer concerning the challenges they face. In this study participants were asked whether they had any suggestions on how to address the problem of youth not growing in their faith. The suggestions made here will not be elaborated in great detail but will be reflected upon in chapter six of this dissertation. A proposed structure that includes the development of youth leadership through training which includes the encouragement of the activities listed was suggested.

*The plan is in place but the implementation that is a little bit of a problem.*

(Int. 4, Cong .4, P 1)

*I would like to see EBC<sup>102</sup> get back to that family idea that we had before, ideas that are the right one. And maybe we lost that, maybe we lost that when we started calling ourselves a denomination rather than a fellowship... We are becoming isolated in our own little areas, let alone our own regions, you know. And with the result that our young people, and if we're thinking about our young people, I always say that our young people are not the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders for today, you know. And if we are not developing them now, we're losing them... we can't afford to have two lost generations in a lifetime. One is enough!*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

##### 4.4.1.3.1 Development (theme 3.1)

The “training of young people” should be prioritised by giving them “information that will develop them spiritually to use every day. This training should include the “mentoring of youth leaders” because they too are young and also a “focus on identity formation” of the youth themselves. Resources were mentioned as important to this development but a call to “approach companies to help with youth” was advised rather than the denominational involvement in attaining resources for its youth ministry.

*Some of them (youth) have learning disabilities – a lot of youth cannot read. So that makes stuff awkward, so there is a challenge to teach the word of God... I check on sites and on the web to find*

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<sup>102</sup> Chapter two noted that the name EBCOSA is recent. Most members still refer to it as EBC (Evangelical Bible Church).

*other ideas. Some ideas don't always work. People make ideas for their own groups. My group is very different, you know.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*Some of the material I did not develop its Pastor's (\*) material you see... because I mean, obviously I learnt that at Bible College where we used to go and give out soup.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 4, P 1)

*Youth group becomes a place of fun and games with absolutely no spiritual input, you know, that has a lasting benefit... there's got to be a structured program, yeah, in the sense that, do they have, is there material that they have, that they are going to go through? Are there any other resources that are available that the young people can actually have access to, to encourage their growth in faith, you know?... if it works in such a way that there is this excitement from the leaders towards the young people, I think, that, No. 1, is contagious or should be contagious. And if the leader is accessible, if he's open to the young people's approach to him or to her, you know, I think in that faith development doesn't only have to take place in a church environment. It can take place outside of the church which I think that many times is a better place... I would say if you go back and say, how are leaders chosen? Do they really have a heart for the ministry, for this ministry?*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

*I am a very young leader. This is the first time that I am doing Youth Ministry, I am only saved now for two and a half years, I am a born again. So I have a fair amount of growth still, you understand what I am saying.*

(Focus group, Cong 6, YL)

*Not actually a youth leader, it's just something that like I wanna become a pastor. Like I preached on Sunday here, last week Sunday and I just felt this is what I wanna do. You have to start somewhere so start with the children and eventually you'll grow so invest in the young ones lives.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 3, YL. 1)

#### 4.4.1.3.2 Structures that need to be put in place (theme 3.2)

Structures that promote the “accountability” of the youth as well as its leadership need to be put in place. The EBCOSA should appoint a “national youth director” to supervise the national and regional youth ministries. Regionally, congregations should aim at appointing “part-time youth pastor(s)”. This is not the first time the above suggestion is made. In chapter two it was noted that a letter (Addendum D) was drafted to the EBCOSA by two of its younger pastors requesting that these structures be put in place. This suggestion was confirmed in the interviews conducted in this study.

*I don't know what other churches are doing in EBC youth... someone needs to take initiative to get something started... teaching values and morals and Bible principles – teaching that is not as easy.*

(Int. 4, Cong. 2, YL 1)

*So making resources available nationally... we could get some material for instance to use with the young people. I think that would help a lot. Some people don't want to get involved in youth ministry because they think there is no help, there is no resources and you have to do your own thing. And if you have to do your own thing, it would take a lot of effort from you. For instance the youth leader works or something like that, he will not get involved in that because he knows he would need to put in a lot of hours and he is not going to neglect it.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*Well, I know on NC level and even on RC, there is no one who is really in charge of youth or children. Somebody is needed, a portfolio or a couple of pastors or – who is asked to assist the church if they are needing help regarding establishing or training youth leaders, you know. And if the men cannot do it, you know, then maybe they need to ask some ladies!*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*Aunty A is guiding me because she is here longer than me and C.<sup>103</sup>*

(Int. 2, Cong. 8, R 1)

*There would have been somebody there with you to show you how it should be done, so it would have been more of a mentoring, showing you how it is done until you able to do it on your own and we leave you with your group. That would be your ministry of welcoming people, but it wouldn't be throwing you in at the deep end you know. Just to say ok fine, you at the door today, but you know, it would have been you with somebody, mentor you and show you through. But if you available for that, fantastic. I meant that's what we looking for, you know.*

(Fg, Cong. 6, Pastor)

#### 4.4.1.3.3 Activities (theme 3.3)

There are certain activities reported to have been lost by the present EBCOSA generation. These include “door- to-door and handing out tracts”, “Bible study”, “random acts of kindness” and attending “prayer meetings”. It should be noted that these suggestions included the voices of the youth as well.

*So it takes, the young adults are the adults in church to be more zeroed in on what the young people are doing and don't just take it for granted that they are there... And I think if you have people like that –*

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<sup>103</sup> Letters have been used to protect the names of these people.

*taking the initiative even if you did not ask them to do it, to zero in on a young person's life, I think we need more of those. But then also to celebrate when it does happen. Celebrate it in the church. Because what you celebrate is what you get.*

(Int. 5, Cong. 2, P 1)

*You go with someone that has the experience in sharing their faith, you listening to what the person. It's like the Timothy and Paul type of idea... once people know who you are and where you want to do the wrong thing, those people will remind you who you are in Christ Jesus*

(Int. 4, Cong. 4, P 1)

*They've had somebody go with them and so, when they take over the full responsibility, they have an idea.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

*I think training our young people. You know we wait until you reach certain levels before you get trained. The earlier we can reach those who are committed to Christ into established leadership roles, the more we can get young people involved.*

(Int. 3, Cong. 8, P 1)

*I think our young people, all young people are battling with this identity crisis, "Who am I? Who am I?" I mean we can deal with that, with the fact that they are unique and special, and God has a purpose and God has a plan for their lives, you know. And then, from that who they are, to what God has blessed them with, their potential, you know, the natural talents, the spiritual gifts, and be able to develop that and allow them to see that, you know, even though they might be young, they do have a place within the church where they can exercise these talents or these gifts that God has blessed them with.*

(Int. 1, Cong. 6, P 1)

*Fg Cong 6, R 1 (Youth): what our church has like the music ministry. They like put you on, well we always used to have like the Youth that was on, well now we have been taken off. So we would like to be put back on...But not just for singing, but also for spiritual dancing, cause we good at that...*

*Interviewer: That's one thing; you want to be involved in music ministry again. Anything else*

*Fg Cong 6, R 1 (Youth): And maybe the ushering thingie, that biscuit thing.*

(Focus group, Cong. 6)

Families and churches have outsourced the parental role in young people's lives to the youth leader (Powell, et al, 2013: 116). Spiritual and scriptural ignorance is increasing among

mainline Protestant young people in Africa because of the ignorance of its youth leaders (2007:60). Youth leaders have not been equipped for the position they hold. The youth transition project also found that many youth mentioned the legacy that authentic youth leaders had left in their lives (Powell, et al, 2013:47). Youth leaders need to be equipped to guide young people in their faith formation. Better care needs to be taken when selecting its youth ministry leadership (Maiko, 2007: 10). Youth leaders are respected greatly by the youth (Powell, et al, 2013:140). Youth leaders also have the responsibility of helping youth wrestle through their faith formation process by helping them align their faith with their daily lifestyles. Many youth come to youth because they want to see their youth leader and not necessarily their peers at youth (ibid: 139-140). Having a youth leader or adult in one's life that is grounded in his or her own faith helps the young person grow spiritually (Maiko, 2007:31).

It is a tragedy that the above-mentioned letter from young pastors within the EBCOSA (in 2009) has not been taken seriously. This letter suggested the following in agreement with the above: a) all children and youth workers in the EBCOSA receive some type of formal theological instruction; b) church leaders apply a more careful and biblical approach when appointing youth and children's leaders; c) a policy document that contains an appointment procedure, which includes qualification criteria like Christian character, spiritual gifts, maturity, training, etc.; d) youth leaders should be encouraged or mandated to attend winter school where special lectures could be taught in order to address specific youth related issues; e) National initiatives like camps and outreaches such as short-term missions could be planned and concluded; f) Set up a national "Youth Help Line" as a counseling and prayer support for parents, pastors, youth, and youth leaders in any situation and on any youth related issue and; g) develop and establish a national resource center for both children and youth ministries.

#### 4.4.2 Summary/Discussion

The empirical study conducted among the youth and its leaders within the EBCOSA was an effort to understand how they understand faith development, as well as which influential factors plays a role during this development as an important part of faith formation. The research findings of this study can be concluded into three categories, namely:

- i) The context in which faith formation takes place within the EBCOSA.
- ii) How faith formation has been implemented or neglected within the EBCOSA by reflecting on the factors that enhance and hinder the faith formation of its youth.
- iii) Suggestions of how this particular denomination can practically improve its faith formation strategies and structures.

The context in which faith formation takes place within the EBCOSA has been explored through reflecting on youth ministry in the EBCOSA's past, youth ministry at present and whether the church (corporately) is actively involved in the faith formation of its youth. Historically youth have been self-motivated and involved within the life of the church. It was reported that it was easier to get involved because the pressures faced by youth in the past were not as complex as current times and then also because these youth were not exposed to youth ministry groups outside of the denomination. Leadership positions were considered as something prized and worth attaining as part of one's Christian purpose. It seems however that gradually this leadership became younger and less qualified because they fall into a generation of youth that have not been equipped. Young people have become less interested in church life and its leadership positions. The state of youth ministry appears to have been measured by the numbers of youth attending regional (combined services) and national (Annual Conference) events. The reality however is, that the EBCOSA's big problems have merged amidst a materialistic and compromising older generation that they have looked up to as an example. What is alarming is that many youth are not even members of this denomination, because loyalty to the denomination is deemed important. Young people seem to be leaving because of the awareness of internal pressures and inconsistencies. Glimpses of hope through a few youth leaders who are teaching the Word of God and a few youth who are prioritizing this Word have been found. The reality that one such young person even referenced Scripture during an interview is quite commendable. As far as context is concerned, it would suffice to say at this point the church may be involved in the faith formation of its youth on an individual and local basis but this is not true on a corporate and national level. The represented leadership, themselves reported that the church has not been concerned with the faith formation of its youth.

The second category of research findings concerned how faith formation has been implemented or neglected within the EBCOSA by reflecting on the factors that enhance and

hinder the faith formation of its youth. This category serves as the core response to the research question explored in this study. What participants (youth) understand a Christian as one who is closely connected to their understanding of faith development. Unpacking what factors enhance and hinder the faith of these youth could only be explored after establishing what their conceptualisation of a Christian and faith development is. This has been followed by asking both the youth, and their leaders whether they felt they were, or were not growing in their faith.

Few of the youth in this study describe a Christian as one who is personally committed to Christ mentally, emotionally and also willingly. This commitment is reflected in a belief in the gospel message, to the Word of God and through active involvement in the church (repenting and acknowledging sin and spreading the gospel). A pastor noted that the youth do not in fact have a proper understanding of Christianity because they are not teachable. The research (Wilhoit, 2008) evidenced, point to the importance of the church teaching and equipping the young people how to approach Christian service and their walk with God.

The participants (youth and leaders) of this study understand faith development as spiritual growth and discipleship. It is the on-going and consistent process evidenced through a Christ-like lifestyle and the types of choices (for example; dealing with difficult situations) made. It is a process because the mystery of God is never fully known and understood. During this process one's attitude towards faith is transformed, knowledge of Scripture and one's Christian walk is acquired and taught and should be evidenced daily. The church has a role to play during this process by taking the holistic discipleship of its youth seriously. This empirical study confirmed the value that music, Scripture memorization, visitation and interaction around Scripture (through technology like Facebook, through group work, and inviting others to church) have on the spiritual growth of youth. The faith formation of these youth affects their personal identity and the modes of faith formation play an important part therein. This reflects their need for relationship and interaction around Scripture.

The participants of this study (youth and leaders) noted the following as contributing (enhancement) factors to their faith formation; having relational support from peers, pastors, youth leaders and family, having an attitude that is open to the reality of trials and not always

feeling close to God, understanding the difference between owning their faith and adherence to church practice. The reality that non-Christian parents can be supportive towards their Christian children was also deemed important. Those who are growing in their faith understand what it biblically means to be a Christ follower and feel confident as young people. Leaders however, equated youth growing in the faith with external adherence through attending the Annual Conference and sharing their testimonies. The practical reasons given for why youth feel rejected should be taken seriously as these are the voices of the youth and pastors which are usually the challenges youth leaders try to present at public meetings. It is also interesting that those who are growing in their faith conversely reported confidence as young people. Those not growing in their faith appear to be placing pressure on the role the youth leader plays in their lives. If the youth leader is not as involved in their lives as they expect, they do not feel growth. Once again, the leaders equated growing in their faith with the leadership positions that are vacant in the denomination, no involvement in Christian service, and poor attendance of the Annual Conference.

The participants of this study (youth and leaders) noted the following as hindrance factors to their faith formation; a) peer pressure linked to low self-image and an inability to confide in their parents, b) feeling rejected by the church and God and c) the reality that even Christian parents can hinder their faith by not being consistent in the way they live at home and at church.

The third category of research findings concerned suggestions from research participants of how this denomination can practically improve its faith formation strategies and structures. The participants (leaders) noted that the denomination needs to put accountability structures for its youth ministry in place. These structures include: i) the provision of youth ministry resources; ii) policies on the appointment of youth leaders; iii) equipping the young adults to mentor the younger youth and; iv) employing a national youth director and local youth pastors. The suggestion to involve young adults was made with the view that this younger generation would relationally walk alongside these youth through supporting and celebrating daily life occurrences of these youth. A youth pastor's job description should also be clarified because at present, a youth pastor is merely a younger pastor who assists the older pastor and helps with the children and youth ministries. There is only one of these youth pastors at present. The current youth leaders are volunteers and work or study full time and therefore these volunteers need to be equipped on how to balance these obligations. It was also

suggested that a portfolio for this youth director should be drawn up. One suggestion noted that if this (a national youth director) was not possible then maybe a group of pastors could take on this responsibility. This suggestion will not be practical as these pastors are already overloaded with responsibilities at their local congregations, with some involved on the Regional and National councils. A jesting remark about females possibly taking on this role in the absence of capable men should be heeded with caution. Female leadership should not be warranted merely because males cannot perform but within in their giftedness and talents for ministry to youth. Another suggestion made in this study has been that youth and its leadership should be developed through a mentorship program. The present intake of youth leaders seems younger than in the past. Some of these leaders are dealing with the same issues that the youth are and find it difficult to lead. This would then mean that the age and qualifications of the youth leader needs to be reconsidered in the above mentioned policy. The youth should be mentored in terms of Christian service, what it entails and what their role therein is. This will consequently empower them to get involved in various church ministries (music ministry, ushering and door-to-door were mentioned). Youth leaders need to be exposed to a post- modern perspective of what youth ministry is and entails. This would include addressing the recent issues (learning disabilities, teenage pregnancy, drugs and abortion were mentioned) these youth are facing and how to approach these matters. It would appear that most youth leaders are still using tools they were handed by their spiritual mentors, but these tools do not seem to be effective at present.

This empirical study has evidenced the reality of most of the components regarding youth faith formation discussed in chapter three. Most of the terms and modes discussed have been evidenced. All three developmental stages relevant to this age group are relevant. All the influential factors have been evident (with a few more added). This study has confirmed faith as a process toward spiritual growth. In summary, the following outcomes of this empirical study are necessary. Overall, the theoretical and empirical data accumulated in this dissertation indicate that faith development is only one aspect of faith formation when studying fourteen to seventeen year old youth. The literature review (chapter three) shifted the researcher's outlook to faith formation rather than exclusively faith development. The responses from the interviews and focus groups conducted were surprising because they were more positive than the researcher anticipated. The responses from the youth did however seem richer than those of its leadership. Some seemed more naïve to the crisis of youth ministry in the EBCOSA whilst others agreed and expressed frustration that nothing is being

implemented. That the youth leader has a profound impact on its youth did not surprise the researcher as much as the impact that pastors are having on these youth. Another surprising element was the impact that the attitude of these youth has had on their faith formation. The reality of a dualistic approach to Christianity has been evidenced in the responses from these youth. Many youth could not reconcile their lives at school, at sporting events and at family outings (fishing or camping), with their lives at church. Many felt that they were not growing in their faith because of not being physically present at church ministries. In this study, Christians who pretend had a louder voice than a non-Christian family. Tension between seeing the church as a fellowship and a denomination was also expressed as evidence for the church not growing. Finally, the doctrine of grace and holistic discipleship should be taken seriously when contemplating the way forward for the youth ministry of the EBCOSA.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has described the empirical process followed during this research study. The research problem and question (what, if any, factors hinder and enhance the faith development of fourteen to seventeen years old youth in this denomination), have been reflected on in order to navigate this process. The challenges the researcher faced during the empirical process was also discussed in this chapter. A qualitative research design using an ethnographic study with individual and focus group interviews as its methodology has been used in this study. This chapter explained how the unit of analysis used in this research study was chosen. Thematic analysis was explained as the data analysis method used in this study. It concluded by sharing a summary of the key findings of this study and a few outcomes thereof. Chapter five discusses these findings through a theological lens by exploring the normative task of practical theological interpretation by asking what then ought to be accomplished within the EBCOSA. Chapter six looks at the pragmatic task by making the necessary recommendations to the EBCOSA for future youth ministry.

## CHAPTER 5

### TOWARDS A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF YOUTH FAITH FORMATION WITHIN AN EVANGELICAL SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on research objective four of this dissertation by answering the normative question of practical theological interpretation: What ought to be going on? This objective is aimed at developing a practical theology on youth faith formation from an evangelical South African perspective. This is done by discussing ethical norms and models of good practice appropriate for the EBCOSA in relation to the research findings discovered. The normative task of practical theological reflection makes use of theological concepts to interpret what ought to be going on within a denomination (the EBCOSA in this case). Ethical principles, guidelines and rules that are relevant to the EBCOSA context are used to guide the strategies of action proposed in chapter six. The researcher draws on the Protestant evangelical tradition as a specific lens through which practical theological interpretation is made. Osmer (2008: 153) notes that one way in which sound theological and ethical interpretation within practical theology is found within transformational practices. These practices are found in faith communities and contexts in which youth faith formation processes have worked. Interaction with these communities enables new ideas that could enrich the faith formation processes of the EBCOSA. The researcher has approached this chapter by first exploring models of good practice through the lens of intra-disciplinary reflections on faith formation in youth ministry and thereafter connecting these models to the theological concepts from which they stem within a South African context. Four comparative research studies (including the present one) on youth faith formation are used in this regard. The two studies conducted by the Fuller Youth Institute and Princeton Theological Institute (discussed in chapter three) as well as a South African research study are compared with the present study through a brief comparative analysis in search of a best practice model. These studies are discussed because they focussed on the faith formation of youth within practical theology within different contexts. These studies are considered as models of good practice and are explored through the lens of intra-disciplinary<sup>104</sup> theological reflections pursued in this chapter (ibid: 8-10). These are explored through prophetic discernment, grounded in a

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<sup>104</sup> Intra-disciplinary dialogue focusses on the conversation between various perspectives within a single field; in this case, practical theology (Osmer, 2008: 163).

spirituality of discernment aimed at helping the EBCOSA and others hear and heed God's Word in the particular circumstances of their lives and world as far as faith formation is concerned (ibid: 29).

This chapter is aligned with World three of Johann Mouton's (2001:137-142) Three Worlds Framework aimed at knowledge production (mentioned in chapter one of this dissertation). World three is the world of meta-science, in which the evaluative process of the research takes place. The researcher acts as an academic and not a member of society (or the EBCOSA) by reflecting on scientific research relevant to the topic studied. Specific evangelical Protestant theological traditions (images, concepts and narratives) within the field of practical theology are elaborated upon through comparing this study with three others. Relevant (practical theologians focussed on youth ministry) South African practical theologians are given priority as the call is towards a South African perspective. New insights between interpreter and the interpreted are shared through discussing the implications of the findings of this research study on three levels; for the EBCOSA, for Practical theology and for youth ministry within evangelical faith communities in South Africa (Osmer, 2008:23).

## 5.2 Comparative studies concerning youth faith formation within practical theology

Chapter four discussed the specific themes discovered in the present research study. This chapter is aimed at comparing this study<sup>105</sup> to three similar studies concerning youth faith formation in an effort to look for best practices within a local (South African) and an international youth ministry context. These were conducted within the disciplines of practical theology<sup>106</sup> in an American and South African context. The key areas which are compared in these studies are: type of study conducted, timeframes in which these were conducted, methodologies used, type of participants and the core content included in each study.

Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton (2005: 3-8, 291 – 307), two American Sociology professors at the University of North Carolina, conducted a survey on the character of youth religion in America in 2001-2005. This was done under the National Study of Youth and Religion in an effort to discover the extent to which youth seek spirituality and how

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<sup>105</sup> The themes discussed here are not as specific as those revealed in chapter four since those are exclusively applicable to the present study. .

<sup>106</sup> The first study mentioned has been conducted within the field of Sociology of Religion and directed by two Sociologists. Practical theologian Kenda Creasy Dean has been involved in this project and has written a separate book (Almost Christian, 2010) reporting on the Christian Church's response to this study. Her theological response to this study makes this study particularly relevant to this dissertation. Other practical theologians involved this research study include; Nancy Ammerman, Eugene Roelkepartian and Dean Borgman.

religion affects the moral reasoning and risk behaviours of these youth. This survey included all major religious traditions (Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, Muslims, Jehovah's Witness, Hinduism, Christian Science, Mormonism and Judaism) in America. The initial survey was conducted telephonically and included at least one parent or guardian. The second phase included interviews with the youth. These youth were between the ages 13-17<sup>107</sup> years old. This was a large study which spanned across America (Northeast, Midwest, South and West) and included 3290 telephonic interviews with English and Spanish speaking participants and 267 individual face-to-face interviews. These interviews followed up on central themes discovered during the telephonic interviews. Interview content included familial backgrounds, stresses and socioeconomic situations, importance of faith to these youth, moral beliefs, youth group attendance and risk behaviours. Interviews were conducted in public spaces (coffee shops, libraries, restaurants, malls, parks and schools). Informed consent was obtained verbally and in written form from parents and youth. Participants were given monetary incentives for their participation. Data was analysed using comparative tests from similar studies conducted in America and the United Kingdom.

The College Transition Project<sup>108</sup> was conducted by practical theologians Kara Powell, Brad Griffin and Cheryl Crawford (2013: 29- 3, 199- 204) under the Fuller Youth Institute during 2004 to 2010. This study was aimed at understanding the dynamics of how youth transition to college and also how the church (including youth leaders), parents and youth can maintain a mature (Sticky) faith. The project included 28 interdenominational churches (Presbyterian, Christ Church, Community Church, United Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Mars Hill Bible church, Nazarene) in America. A longitudinal research study was conducted through online and paper questionnaires with 500 professional youth pastors who were employed on a full time basis and with the youth. Focus groups, summits and national seminars were also conducted with these youth pastors. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 45 of these youth and individual consultations were conducted with youth leaders. A sticky faith<sup>109</sup> cohort comprised the congregations mentioned above which were included through summits and monthly webinars. The youth were 18 years old and older and

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<sup>107</sup> Some youth were 18 years old at the conclusion of this study due to it being longitudinal (over 3 years).

<sup>108</sup> The American Catholics in Transition Project is a similar project conducted between 1987-2011 amongst the same age group of four generations of Catholics. The findings thereof are not elaborated on in this study but are documented in a book called *Americans in Transition* by sociologists; William V.D'Antonio, Michele Dillon and Mary L Gautier (2013).

<sup>109</sup> Sticky faith is the reference given to an internally and externally mature and maturing faith grounded in a personal and communal relationship with God (Powell, et al, 2013:21)

were mainly from intact<sup>110</sup> families. These youth had to be part of a church youth group and intending to attend college or university. They were selected through youth leader contacts. Participants of this study were mainly English speaking. This too, was a large study which spanned across America (Southwest, Northwest, Southeast and Northeast). Informed consent was obtained in written form from youth. Data was analysed through reference to parallel studies, exploration of theology (faith and youth group experience measuring instruments) and Scripture. Some of the content analysed in these instruments were how frequent these youth engaged in communal and individual church practices, why they go to youth group and what they wanted to see happening in their youth groups. A sociologist was also consulted to confirm the national trends noted. This project was conducted outside the age parameters required for the present research study but was found relevant because these young people's faith trajectories are formed long before 16 years old (Powell, et al, 2013: 23).

Practical theologians; Hendrick Pieterse, Johannes van der Ven and Jaco Dreyer from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, the University of South Africa (Unisa) and Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands jointly conducted an ongoing quantitative a large-scale empirical-theological research project on Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth. Two surveys completed at eighteen (private and public) schools in the Pretoria and Johannesburg area in 1995-1996 and in 2000-2002, each time involving the same schools. This project looks at the images of Jesus and the belief in salvation of Grade 11 learners (approximately 15-16 years old) from English-speaking private school learners and Afrikaans speaking public school learners in order to obtain a more prolific picture of the belief of the Afrikaans speaking youth. It focused on the question of what these teenagers' views are regarding a central aspect of our Christian belief, namely their belief in Jesus and their belief in salvation, and how this belief (in salvation) influences their attitudes towards human rights. The effect that their belief in salvation has on their views regarding human rights is also examined. Questionnaires were used but only the data of the self- confessed Christian respondents was analysed. The research question posed in this project was: "Are different images of Jesus to be found in the consciousness of this group of the South African youth?" The content included various themes like God, Jesus, salvation, the church, their personal religious practice, the degree of secularisation and the influence of their faith on their decisions of various kinds but greater emphasis was placed on testing various dimensions of Christological attitudes of these youth. The measuring instrument was thus constructed with reference to three criteria: Christology, pastoral experience and methodology. A factor

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<sup>110</sup> Both father and mother were living in the home.

analysis confirmed three attitudes towards Jesus – the orthodox or neoscholastic attitude, the dialectical and the liberation-theological attitudes. An interesting finding, however, was what could be described as a combination in one factor of the liberal-theological, the secular-theological and the Jesulogical attitudes moulding into a single image of Jesus, which can be termed: Jesus as a model of true humanity. What then could the reason for this be? All three attitudes developed from the humanity of Jesus as its base (Pieterse, 2003: 1090).

The focus of the present research study has been to understand youth faith formation and what possible factors that could hinder and enhance this faith formation process. It started in 2008 with the empirical study being conducted during March to May of 2012. One evangelical denomination (the EBCOSA) has been used as case within South Africa. Face-to-face interviews and focus groups were conducted with 14-17 years old youth, their youth leaders and pastors. In most instances these youth leaders are volunteers who have other jobs or are studying at university or college. The pastors interviewed are employed on a full time basis. The youth were from nuclear, single-parent and guardian parent families. These youth are all part of a church youth group and were selected through youth leader and pastors (or church boards). Participants of this study were mainly English speaking. This was a not as large a study as the two mentioned and was restricted to 8 local congregations of the same denomination across South Africa (Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Gauteng, and Natal). Informed consent was obtained in written form from youth, their parents and also the leadership included. Data was analysed using thematic analysis, through consulting inter and intra disciplinary research and Scriptural texts. The latter is mentioned as part of theoretical framework employed in this study (interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks). Some of the content analysed was church membership, involvement and frequency in communal and individual church practices and why this is the case, how they experienced their faith positively and negatively, and what they wanted to see happening in their youth ministries.

The comparative analysis of the four studies revealed important differences in context and methodology that impact how each is perceived. The researcher realises that the underlying motivations of each has not been fully described resulting in certain criterion of these studies not being investigated. The comparative aspect was based on each of these studies focussing on youth faith formation. The National Study of Youth and Religion was an inter-religious study conducted with youth (13-17) and their parents in the Northeast, Midwest, south and west parts of America. Telephonic and individual face-to-face interviews were used and focussed on familial backgrounds, stresses and socioeconomic situations,

importance of faith to these youth, moral beliefs, youth group attendance and risk behaviours. The College Transition Project was an interdenominational study conducted with youth (18 and older) and professional (full-time and paid) youth leaders in the Southwest, Northwest, Southeast and Northeast of America (different to the previous study). Online and paper questionnaires, focus groups, summits, national seminars, face-to-face interviews and individual consultations were used and focused on how frequent these youth engaged in communal and individual church practices, why they go to youth group and what they wanted to see happening in their youth groups. The Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth Project was a school-based Christian study conducted with youth (15-16) in Pretoria and Johannesburg, South Africa. Surveys through use of questionnaires and a factor analysis was used and focussed on themes like God, Jesus, salvation, the church, their personal religious practice, the degree of secularisation and the influence of their faith on their decisions and the Christological attitudes of these youth. The present doctoral study was conducted with youth (14-17), volunteer youth leaders (not paid or full time) and professional pastors (paid, full-time and part-time) from one evangelical denomination (the EBCOSA) in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Gauteng, and Natal, South Africa. Face-to-face interviews and focus groups were used and focussed on church membership, involvement and frequency in communal and individual church practices and why this is the case, how they experienced their faith positively and negatively, and what they wanted to see happening in their youth ministries.

Each of these research studies were conducted with youth and included at least one other influential voice in their lives (parents or leaders). Each of these looked at the faith of these youth on various levels; relevance, practise and experience. The following themes influencing the faith formation of youth were discovered (Smith & Lundquist, 2005:26-29, Dean, 2010:201-205 & Powell, et al, 2013: 29-100, Pieterse, 2003: 1081-1105 and chapter four of this dissertation).

Most of these youth:

- Experience a variety of religious and spiritual beliefs, practices, identities and attitudes. Most of them call themselves Christians but how they perceive Christianity is not understood. Some of the youth in the present study described a Christian as one who is personally committed to Christ mentally, emotionally and also willingly. This commitment is reflected in a belief in the gospel message, to the Word of God and through active involvement in the church (repenting and acknowledging sin and

spreading the gospel). The older cohort in the College Transition Project, did not mention Jesus in this description at all. They did not have a Jesus centred view of the gospel. According to the youth in the Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth Project, salvation manifests itself only in the plural (Pieterse, 2003: 1097). This study found that church membership, participation and religious socialisation factors positively enhances religious communication between youth and their parents whereas religious steering God's salvation in the eschatological future played no role whatsoever in exercising an effect on the human rights culture of youth.

It seems that as far as religion is concerned, young people (fourteen to seventeen years old) tend to be eclectic gathering elements from different religions and fuse them into a personal religion (Dreyer, 2004: 924).

- Engage in deliberate practices (worship with other believers, reading Scripture, prayer, confession and forgiveness, service, how you use your body, music, faith education) of faith which play an important role in their faith. The present research study however, confirmed this because the faith formation of these youth affects their personal identity and these modes (practices) play an important part therein. This reflects their need for relationship and interaction around Scripture. Young people pray when confronted with problems concerning others. They ask for or hope for something or they meditate. They seek emotional help from God. Our time has been characterized as a time of religions without God. Religiosity is free, self-chosen, individual, tentative, always moving and accidental. Traditional believers, on the other hand, experience their religion from a sense of duty, as bound to specific times and places, regular and in community (Dreyer, 2004: 927). Conversely, the older cohort found faith to be an internal issue (heart committed to the Lord) not necessitating involvement in religious practices.
- Find that the practices discussed above have theological, spiritual and moral meaning and are crucial to a vibrant religious faith. This connection between faith and morality has been evidenced in each of these studies (faith and risk behaviour, faith and human rights, faith and choice for or against church and youth group). Conversely, the older cohort found that the level of religious activity one has, has no connection to one's personal faith. This is specifically relevant to this study because most evangelical churches are losing youth at this age group and this cohort not seeing any reason for

religious activity could be a reason they do not feel welcome in a context (like the EBCOSA) where they are expected to become leaders at this stage.

- Are not really spiritual seekers but are orientated toward and engaged in conventional religious traditions and communities. This means they do not see the value of faith for their identity and lifestyles leaving it as something to pursue in the future. Secularised young people do not like power, history, institutions and grand narratives. They have no vested interests. They only have themselves and their own fragile personal stories (Dreyer, 2004:927). The youth in the Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth Project, agreed with a plurality<sup>111</sup> of salvation images. This finding negates the view that only one image of salvation is possible in terms of which God is said to have realised his relationship with humankind and the world yet confirms the variety of religious experiences mentioned earlier.
- Could not articulate<sup>112</sup> (explain) their faith because no one taught them how to talk about their faith or provided opportunities to do so. This was true for youth who attended Church regularly as well. The older cohort had learnt the art of managing one's sin (a moral concern). This means that young people learn that being a Christian involves following the list of do's and don'ts. If they do not match up to the list by managing their sin effectively they decide to leave the faith. It was found that older adults had modelled this list type of Christianity rather than a gospel centred one. In the present study; leaders equated youth growing in the faith with external adherence through attending annual conference and sharing testimonies.
- Engaged in these practices centre their lives around relationships and institutions to intersect and overlap with other aspects of their lives. The more these youth felt connected to their Christian leaders the more likely they were to invest time in Christian activities. The opposite reality was also true. The present study confirmed

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<sup>111</sup> These included God's immanent transcendent salvation in the present, God's transcendent salvation in the primordial past, God's transcendent salvation in the eschatological future, God's salvation in the intrapersonal and interpersonal/local domain, or God's salvation in a global sense.

<sup>112</sup> Fowler (in Dykstra and Parks, 1986:38) defined articulation as translating experience and commitment into words and actions. This enables persons to be more responsive and intentional in their own faith growth. It alerts them to unrecognized conflicts, indicating readiness for growth. Commitments are consolidated, integrated, and evaluated in the process of articulation.

this as well. This means that youth need an integrative faith that agrees with a holistic understanding of faith as proposed by Neihbur (faith cube). The older cohort reported that the family and societal backgrounds they came from were not enough to sustain their faith whilst at college. It was not as simple as that. The present research study revealed that having an attitude that is open to the reality of trials and not always feeling close to God, understanding the difference between owing their faith and adherence to church practice was also deemed important to growing in their faith and living this faith daily.

- Are influenced greatly by the adults (parents mainly) in their lives whether positively or negatively. Most of the older youth reported that they did not feel supported by the adults in their congregations but were greatly influenced by their parents. They did however report being supported by their youth pastors. The present research study revealed that having relational support from peers, pastors, youth leaders and family and the reality that non-Christian parents can be supportive towards their Christian children were contributing towards their faith formation.
- Reflected on what most of the American and South African religious community was looking like; displacing traditional faith with an individualistic mass-consumerism Christianity of postmodernity. The present research study revealed that the EBCOSA's big problems have merged amidst a materialistic and compromising older generation that they have looked up to as an example. These studies confirm that the generation before them (Gen X<sup>113</sup>) also requires attention.
- Who are involved in religious practices do better in life than those who are not. This religious activity is viewed alongside all other extra-curricular activity and not seen as anything different. It is another thing in their lives that requires their time. The older cohort study found that alcohol consumption and sexual activity was lower in youth that were involved in religious activities at the age of 13-17 years old. Those who were involved in leadership showed stronger faith than those who didn't. Many did not spend much time reading Scripture and praying as they had other things calling for their attention. The present research study found that young people are less interested in church life and its leadership positions and seem to be leaving because of the

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<sup>113</sup> Generation X'ers are youth born between 1965 and 1981 (Seibel and Nel, 2010:2). This generation does not include the present teenage youth who are also separated from the church.

awareness of internal pressures and inconsistencies with the faith community (governance and relationship).

- The older cohort reported that not all of them were as close to their youth group peers as one would assume. The present study revealed that peer pressure linked to low self-image and an inability to confide in their parents, feeling rejected by the church and God, the reality that even Christian parents can hinder their faith by not being consistent in the way they live at home and at church were factors noted as hindrances to their faith formation

### 5.3 Summative discussion of comparative study

The Christian faith of the youth in the four studies above, had very little to do with God's redemptive work in the world. Instead, faith has been evidenced as being externally well-behaved and loving others (Setran & Kiesling, 2013:22). Correlating to Smith and Denton's phrase; MTD (Monotheistic Therapeutic Deism), Pieterse (2003:1088) discusses the secular-theological attitude towards Jesus in which the transcendent dimension of Christ does not feature in the God-images of these youth. According to Paul Van Buren (1963), Jesus was someone who lived and acted in complete freedom, the exponent or model of a good human being. Christ as a human being and divine being makes him the perfect example to follow. His authority lies in how His divine nature relates to the thinking and attitudes of mankind giving freedom to be who we are. In this way, Christians are freed to consort lovingly with other people. This loving association with fellow humans according to Jesus' example has no explicit religious reference but is important from a moral perspective. The caring, concern and loving association with people which Jesus exemplified to us, represent his meaning to secularised people today. This relationship between faith and morality is also reflected in the youth's openness and respect for other faith traditions at the expense of fully understanding and grappling with their own. This was evidenced in their views on salvation and being a Christian. Consideration for the role that culture plays within the lives of these youth has not been taken seriously in any of these studies. The process of inculturation; in which the gospel message is explained as relevant to the cultural context these youth find themselves in has not been emphasized (Bujo & Muyo, 2008:191 & Kiaziku, 2009: 19). The fact that each of these studies has been large gives the researcher some idea of the vast task this would entail.

Each of these studies is connected to youth identity, moral and faith formation in some way. Most of the youth are interested in getting involved in Christian practices (like youth group) that were found most relevant to their lifestyles in terms of socialisation and time. These youth got involved in activities that are connected to moral values that they adhere or aspire to. Most of these youth desire authentic and consistent relationship with their peers, parents, youth leaders and pastors. An alarming finding is the voice of the older cohort who connected their lack of involvement in church practices to the lack of support from adult Christians. This connection between identity formation and faith formation, as well as the community seeking character of Christian faith formation, is vital for youth ministry today (Cloete, 2012: 70). Malan Nel (2003:147) confirms that identity formation and faith formation are interrelated processes necessary for becoming who we already are in Christ. Youth ministry sometimes neglects this connection and tries to focus on the spiritual without recognizing how these two processes are interrelated. Youth ministry could help to focus on real life issues and experiences of young people and not only on cognitive processes of knowing or behavioural changes, by creating spaces where these youth can discover themselves in the face of God (Cloete, 2012: 70).

As noted in chapter three, identity, moral and faith formation cannot be totally explained (Powell, et al, 2013:61). The church and family can assist this process but cannot dictate the outcome thereof. Cloete (2012:72) argues that the post-modern changes in context and culture have evoked a crisis of meaning for people. It is during this search for meaning that youth tend to focus on the mystery, otherness or transcendence of God more than what they know about him, find comfort in experience rather than in knowledge. Powell, Griffin and Crawford (2013: 62) recommend that Christian rituals and rites of passage be developed to assist them in this regard. Rituals helps young people understand who they are within the larger family and faith community because these rituals exhibit that their stories are intertwined with the Story of God. Rites of passage celebrate and acknowledge what they are experiencing at different stages of their spiritual growth process. Rituals to acknowledge their age transitions from childhood to youth; cultural milestones such as attaining a driver's licence and spiritual milestones such as getting baptised or confirmed are all examples that could be considered. The faith formation modes (discussed in chapter three) could also be used at spiritual rituals and the value thereof should be explained and discussed with these youth. Many churches fail to include youth in communion for example (ibid). They too could be involved in administering this important mode of faith formation. Helping youth discover and use their spiritual gifts could also be understood as a spiritual rite of passage because

doing this includes them in the faith community (ibid: 64). Once youth are encouraged to use these as they discover who God is and how they fit into his-story, they will begin to experience a growing faith and also feel useful in the church and world today. These correlate to the shiny eyes mentioned in chapter four. Journaling could also be helpful in helping youth reflect on their faith journey as a ritual (Powell, et al, 2013: 65). This reflective process aids them in their identity formation as well. Youth need to understand the value of dignity in others as they embark on a faith journey. These rituals would help them understand the value of others and also give them a sense of care for others. If this is instilled as part of identity formation, youth will not only respect themselves better but also respect the other better as they grow in God's sense of service – being able to live amidst the challenges, ambiguities and needs of others instead of comparing in a search for status and instead of only a few getting involved in God's mission.

A Christian identity is formed through the process of socialization<sup>114</sup>. This requires a Christian social context that stresses the importance of a faith relationship with God. The faith community can be this context through its learned behaviour patterns, values, beliefs, symbols, traditions and shared worldviews. Practical theologian, Yolanda Dreyer (2004:928) describes socialization as the process by which human creations such as customs and ideas are transmitted to the next generation. In this process the objectivised cultural meanings are taught by the older generation and accepted (internalised) by the younger generation. Religion has a socializing role and also fulfils the function of providing meaning and order for human experiences. Young people should be empowered to critically reflect on these patterns, values, beliefs, symbols, traditions and worldviews if they are to own their faith and take responsibility for it (Groome, 1980:115). As mentioned earlier, Erikson warns that part of youth development is a sense of egoism and pride in self. This brings with it the need to 'get with the times' through fashion trends, music styles, choice of friends, etc. It is important to teach youth that a real part of identity formation should encompass as sense of denying oneself (John 6:38). To be Christ-like would mean willingly giving up personal desires, plans, thoughts for a greater purpose; that of glorifying God. Many who have actively been able to do this can testify to the enormous blessing that accompanies a life built on this base.

In his book, *Formation of the Moral self*, Van der Ven (1998) calls for a practical theological theory of morally educating these youth through integrating their practical

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<sup>114</sup> Socialization is the process in which people become who they are through interaction with the people in their social environment. This, just a spiritual formation, is a life-long process (Groome, 1980:109 & 110).

experiences with their theological ethical understandings. He agrees that moral and faith formation are connected and interdependent on each other and should not be neglected as such. Two of the modes he advocates for moral education to take place are emotional and character formation. Chapter three already discussed the importance of understanding developmental theories relevant to youth faith formation. Youth faith formation should thus not be contemplated without taking their identity and moral formation into consideration. According to Van der Ven (1998:12-13 & 30-38) moral education takes places formally through relationships in which discipline and socialization take place and informally through organized church practices. The former (discipline and socialization) is aimed at teaching young people self-discipline as an habitual part of their lifestyles and being able to internalize the values and norms of those within their social environments (family, church, society). It is through authenticity or lack thereof in these relationships that these youth are being educated daily without anyone even noticing. Young people need to develop the ability to communicate with people from other communities within a pluralistic and multicultural society, with people from within their own communities and even with themselves in order to make sound choices and decisions and even at times compromise (ibid:38). It is through this process that values are internalized. This correlates with all four studies which show that youth are not rigid in their thinking and interaction with other faiths and belief systems. It also alerts the church to the importance of exposing these youth to different viewpoints within the safe environments (church) they have come to. This perspective goes against the one which considers young people as not seeking faith. Moral formation takes place when one is indeed in search of truth.

Through organized church practices, seven modes of moral education are necessary, namely; that moral values are transmitted, developed at different life stages, clarified through safe spaces in which questioning is key, emotional and character formation. Van der Ven (1998: xii) stresses the value of moral communication (as the ongoing process of moral exchange and understanding in search for truth) as integral to each of the modes described. It could be argued that the modes of faith formation proposed earlier in this dissertation (chapter three) cannot be taught apart from the modes of moral formation mentioned here. Van der Ven (ibid: 40) adds that these modes too are informally present in the lives of these youth. He assumes formation to be a dialectical process in which the young person is formed but also forms those they interact with because he assumes the self to be both individual and communal in nature. The importance of moral formation within the context of relationship cannot be over stressed. In this regard, youth faith formation should also not be contemplated without taking their individual and communal contexts into account (Van der Ven, 1998:30).

A young person between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years old is undergoing identity formation. This is the time in this youth's life when many decisions are made (career paths, friendships, faith, etc.) that would ultimately mould this youth into the adult they want to become. Van der Ven (ibid: 379-384) notes that all the modes of moral formation he emphasizes are aimed at character formation. This character formation is not one that can be dictated by fixed values and behaviour patterns but should take seriously the paradox of self-concern, concern for the other and caring for what is significant and caring for the significance of the other. Young people need to be confronted with the plurality of values, beliefs and cultures they encounter daily and should not be coerced into only one perspective to the situation. Their families and churches need to enable them to develop the discernment they need to make their own life choices. The importance of the faith community, their educational and societal community and their familial community lies in them being able to listen to the opinions of others and also share their opinions with others as they process their faith. Good motivations and intentions must be embodied in right practices (ibid: 384).

#### 5.4 Implications of the research findings:

##### 5.4.1 The EBCOSA

###### 5.4.1.1 A broader Protestant evangelical perspective

Chapter one described evangelical as those believing in and proclaiming the salvific work of Christ, the inerrant and inspired Word of God and a Triune God. Evangelicals believe in a sovereign, transcendent, personal and infinite God who is holy, loving, compassionate and identifies with the sufferings of His people. The Word of God is accepted as authoritative guide for both faith and practice. Chapter two positioned the EBCOSA as an evangelical denomination adhering to a fundamentalistic dispensationalist theological perspective. A brief discussion on the history of the evangelical church and its impact on society was deemed necessary in light of the challenges this study has discovered within the EBCOSA. This history holds true to the fundamental doctrines and ecclesial culture of the EBCOSA and is deemed relevant when considering youth faith formation in the future. Spiritually growth in this context takes place through the processes of justification and sanctification. Sanctification is understood as the continual inward process of renewing and cleansing of every believer. Christians are thus sanctified at conversion. Evangelicals rely on the illumination of the Holy Spirit because they recognise the total depravity of humanity through original sin. Salvation is thus through grace and faith alone and not by works. It is quite ironic

that this study revealed that youth considered their works (church practices) most important to their faith and did not fully understand these doctrines of salvation and grace.

The evangelical church share many beliefs with other orthodox churches (Trinity, Christ's incarnation, virgin birth, bodily resurrection, church as the body of Christ, sacraments as means of grace and the final resurrection) but places at its core its beliefs based on church history. The Reformation era characterised an evangelical as one who sought to redirect Christianity to the gospel and renew the church based on the authoritative Word of God. Contemporary Germany evangelical is synonymous with the term Protestant, hence the reference to Protestant evangelical in earlier chapters. Evangelicals<sup>115</sup> in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were very involved in social action as an outflow of the Christian faith and as evidence of their spiritual growth (Elwell & Pierard in Elwell, 2001:405-409). The Holy Spirit empowers the believer daily during this process. The pursuit of holiness in this instance does not mean that Christians withdraw themselves from society but instead get involved in transforming sin and evil therein. Evangelicals get involved in outreach and service as evidence of this spiritual growth. They look forward to an immanent, personal return of Jesus Christ. Resulting in them becoming the witness of Christ to a sinful world through faith formation practices (discipleship) that engages with the social needs of humanity (ibid & Deiros in Dyrness & Karkkainen, 2008: 331-335). America became the hub of evangelicalism (twentieth century) given recognition to its impact on shaping the nation's values and civil religion. Chapter one also connected the origin of youth ministry to this American context. Conservative evangelicals emerged by the late twentieth century (after World War II) in when the National Evangelical Anglican Congress and Congress of Confessing Fellowships were formed in Germany and the National Association of Evangelicals and Fuller Theological Seminary in America. This new stream of evangelicalism (conservative) was ecumenical emphasizing the social dimension of the gospel as well. This stream opposed the initial fundamentalism<sup>116</sup> (of which the EBCOSA adheres to) saying that fundamentalists focussed on a one-sided approach to the gospel which excluded the initial social action approach for which evangelicalism stood (ibid). The role of evangelicals in the democratization of South Africa has been uncertain because on one hand they opposed what they assume to be a liberal-democratic constitution and bill of rights yet on the other hand this

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<sup>115</sup> An important reference for the EBCOSA would be that the Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Calvinist, Salvation Army and Presbyterian churches all form part of this evangelical church.

<sup>116</sup> It should pointed out here that fundamentalism is not restricted to the Christian faith but could be included other religious groups as well (in Dyrness & Karkkainen, 2008: 332). All references here are however to Christian fundamentalism.

opposition resulted in white conservative evangelicals being voted into political parties (Balcomb, 2004: 6). What is important to note is that evangelicals did however play an integral role in the democratization of this country and continue to do so (ibid). Anthony Balcomb (2004:7- 38) conducted a study of five evangelical (leadership) types that were developed from the evangelical churches' response to the apartheid era in South Africa. Leaders like Bishop Frank Retief and the Church of England in South Africa (CESA) supported the apartheid because of the biblical injunction to submit to the authority of the day. Ray McCauley and the Rhema Church were considered apolitical because they resisted the apartheid but later changed their theology and political beliefs when the forces against apartheid acquired greater influence in the late eighties. Leaders like Michael Cassidy and the African Enterprise opposed apartheid but believed it contributed to the work towards reconciliation and gradual change in the country. Leaders like Frank Chikane and the Apostolic Faith Mission were considered liberal evangelicals because their opposition to apartheid drove them towards getting involved in the political struggle against it. The largest active evangelical group were constituted under leaders like Nicholas Bhengu and the Back to God Movement (ibid:8). This group became reputable as the alternative community because their theology transcended political categories and asserted the alternative values of the kingdom of God.

#### 5.4.1.2 A dispensational fundamentalistic theological paradigm

According to Deiros (in Dyrness & Karkkainen, 2008: 331-335), there is no strict definition of fundamentalism. What is common to all forms thereof is that there seems to be a named enemy that becomes the force which provides this type of evangelical the energy which drives it. In the EBCOSA's case, dispensationalism seems to be this driving force. In its simplest form, fundamentalism can be aligned to a habit of mind which aims at preserving the distinctive identity of the faith community that adheres to it (ibid). Fundamentalists preserve foundational Christian doctrines from the attacks of modern science and thought through emphasis on the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture and its infallibility and inerrancy in doctrinal, ethical and historical matters. These qualities were evidenced in the empirical study conducted with the EBCOSA. Much emphasis is thus placed on traditional church practice at the expense of the very biblical truth that they profess to adhere to, giving precedence to church polity above biblical truth. This has devastating influences on the youth ministries of these faith communities (as in the case of the EBCOSA). Fundamentalists boast in their capacities to live among people with various worldviews whilst remaining steadfast towards its own. One of the ways it upholds this approach is to hold fast to its historical past

church history and practices (ibid: 332). This too has been evident in this research study in which most pastors interviewed placed emphasis on the heritage they have as a faith community. Youth faith formation has been equated to church loyalty. Fundamentalism also opposes the idea of development by adhering to an ethical strictness aligned to a literal approach to Scripture (ibid). This too has been evident in how the EBCOSA has dealt with disciplining youth who have fallen into sin (teenage pregnancy) and also in how many of its pastors view youth (rebellious and ungodly).

Evangelical fundamentalism has also been associated as a world-wide phenomenon which is deeply conditioned by the break-up of colonial empires and the founding of new democratic nations. It thrives in contexts in which people are faced with poverty, misery, illiteracy and oppressive rule such as South Africa (Deiros in Dyrness & Karkkainen, 2008: 335). The Evangelical Alliance (connected to TEAM) played a big role in sending out missionaries to evangelize these poverty stricken and oppressed countries, was formed in London in 1846 (Elwell & Pierard in Elwell, 2001: 405-409). Chapter two placed the origin of the EBCOSA (through TEAM missionaries) to the early 1950's, the then apartheid South Africa. The foundation of this denomination was also positioned within the background of the colonial empire resulting in detrimental after effects of foreign missions on the governance and leadership of the EBCOSA. Describing the South African apartheid system, missiologist; David Bosch (2011: 417-419) says that evangelicals felt forced to respond and articulate their views on evangelism, mission, structural evil and the church's response to justice in society. Sin was viewed as both personal and structural resulting in a broadened approach to ministry in this country. The evangelical church was thus called to minister in a context in which personal renewal of God's Spirit and a structural challenge and transformation in society was necessary. The spiritual dualism in which evangelism and social action are separated need to be addressed in order for the evangelical church' witness to be effective in this country. In an article entitled; *The Political Role and Democratic Contribution of Churches in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Tracy Kuperuss (2011:305) argues that the South African church and interdenominational organizations, particularly the increasingly influential evangelical churches, have plenty of room for improvement in fostering good governance. She recommends that the church work on maintaining a critical, independent voice vis-à-vis the government, developing sound principles of political engagement; building ecumenical bridges in public affairs discourse, and affirming the public role of theology. The results of the Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth (Pieterse, Van der Ven & Dreyer) Project challenge preachers to think dialectically and hermeneutically in a new age

and context. A few practical implications and suggestions gleaned from this study for youth ministry would be; that sermons preached in congregations are intentional in strengthening these youth's belief in salvation and its implications for the human rights culture and its implications pertaining to the socio-economic and environmental rights which they so heartily subscribe to, treat the youth as equal partners and communicate with them in freedom by presenting our message in freedom and acting as examples of the Christian faith in this freedom by creating safe spaces for questioning, preachers should be inspired by the results that the youth's engagement with the church (except for some forms of religious praxis such as Bible reading, transfer of religious insights, etc) has a positive effect on the human rights culture and appreciate that scientifically tested information of the beliefs of the youth empowers us to engage in understanding our Christian tradition in a way which is sensible for today, and which can lead to a preaching that can shed new, inspirational light on our situation (Pieterse, 2003: 1102- 1103). The theological stance (evangelical fundamentalist) of the EBCOSA has been discussed in light of the broader academic discussion thereof. The following section reflects on evangelical perspectives on the key research findings mentioned in connection with the three research studies above as relevant to the EBCOSA.

#### 5.4.1.3 Ecclesial Praxis

If the EBCOSA are to continue into the future, new members should be evangelized and welcomed. One way of doing this is educating the young to know and continue with the traditions and biblical thrust it adheres to. It is also important for these traditions to be reformulated and reinterpreted in such a way that each new generation can find answers to the questions of their time and place. Churches (like the EBCOSA) seem to have difficulty persuading the youth that the tradition does in fact have significant meaning for their lives (Dreyer, 2004: 936). Siebel and Nel (2010: 2) argue that young people frequently are welcome to participate only on the terms dictated by their elders, rather than on the basis of willingness on the part of the elder generations to adapt or to negotiate differences across generational lines. This also correlates with Matham's conclusion that the discipleship model used by TEAM in founding the EBCOSA was not true to the biblical mandate of the Great Commission. The disconnection between the church's practices and the cultural realities of this generation are reasons why they have rejected institutional Christianity (Seibel & Nel, 2010:2).

Cloete (2012: 75) notes generational fragmentation within the church through age-specific ministries and separation of people at different spiritual levels in their faith as a common

challenge because it creates the impression that the church would function better when generations are separated. Seibel and Nel (2010:1) argue that the church as an intergenerational community is evident retrospective reflection and hopeful expectation. As an eschatological community called to bear witness to the already, but not yet reign of God, the church must strive to practice what the New Testament frequently describes as 'patient endurance'. These scholars add that the church has the task of transmitting its faith tradition from one generation to the next. In the transition to postmodernity, many established congregations have proven to be ineffective at this traditioning process in relation to Generation X (Gen X), the first postmodern generation. As noted earlier, the lack of Christ-like examples in today's church is connected to the generation before the youth being discussed here. The reasons for the ineffectiveness are complex. They give two key factors that contribute to the problem, namely; the reduction of the church's tradition to its particular expression within the culture of modernity and the marginalisation experienced by Gen Xers within many established churches. By reduction they explain that over time, faith communities (formed within a given culture) have reduced their understanding of the gospel to that which has resulted from the interface of gospel and culture in that context. This reduced understanding of the faith becomes problematic when 'the sinful human desire to control begins to do its work' Marginalisation has prevented young people from becoming effective bearers of the church's tradition. If this trend is to be reversed, churches should succeed in renewing their traditions in a way that is meaningful in a postmodern context. The church, as a bearer of tradition should endeavour to provide a setting in which individuals might gain a vital experience of faith and an authentic sense of identity and in which successive generations might be incorporated into the Christian tradition.

In contrast to a culture that encourages the silencing of youth voices, Yust encourages that youth be taught the value of silence in their relationship with God through times of solitude and hearing from God. Cloete (2012:2) argues that culture is integral to how people understand themselves, their belief systems and their lifestyles. This culture influences youth expression of their convictions and their collective identity. She adds that the context in which a certain culture develops and is lived demand careful consideration of the busy society these youth are part of. Youth culture portrays what broader society dictates through embodying these societal norms and values, which are then contextualised to where these youth find themselves. The importance of silence for personal reflection on life is not encouraged. One of the challenges the EBCOSA would need to address in implementing the value of silence, would be to practise times of silence as a faith community first.

An intergenerational church culture needs to be established or restored through a youth ministry that create spaces of dialogue and intergenerational contact that counter this individualistic approach and foster Christian faith formation which is community oriented. One way to assist this process would be to have the blessing of the senior pastor upon the youth ministry. In the EBCOSA this would extend to having the full thrust of the church behind establishing an intergenerational church culture in which young and old are ministered to (Cloete, 2013: 75 & Powell, and others 2013: 83). As churches pass their traditions from generation to generation, rituals, ceremonies, and religious texts represent a tie to the past, a connection to a transcendent history (Siebel and Nel, 2010: 2). One way to do this would be to reverse the youth-adult ministry ratio to five adults to one youth (5:1 culture) (Powell, et al, 2013: 79). When this is implemented, these youth experience support and nurture in such a way that they do not feel the need to leave the church. Another way could be implementing a youth vision and mission statement and sharing this with the congregational leadership. Mark DeVries (2008:57-73) notes that these along with a three year goal projection, a statement of values and an organizational chart are imperative structures that should be implemented if a church is to sustain its youth ministry. This 5:1 culture has to be integrated into the teaching, worship, mentoring rituals, other ideas around youth ministry and the role of parents (Powell, et al, 2013: 84- 96). Seibel and Nel (2010:1) note that consistent religious socialisation and meaningful religious experience are important enablers of an intergenerational church. They believe that the faith embraced by each new generation needs to be faith that can be understood and expressed in terms of their specific subculture. This is why the EBCOSA (and other congregations) should be willing to empower each rising generation with the freedom to make their distinctive mark upon the shape of that tradition.

Re-engaging the members of the marginalised Gen X (parents of the youth) must also be recognised. This generation has the potential to play an important role in helping local congregations to respond to the changes associated with the emergence of a postmodern world. Siebel and Nel (2012: 4-6) suggest six additional ways a church can bridge the intergenerational gap that exists, namely: a commitment of older church members to view new generations not as competitors, but as collaborators in shaping the tradition, commitment of older church members to share resources with Gen Xers and those who come after them; willingness to listen to young adults and youth and a commitment to empower and equip them to contribute actively to leadership and decision making processes; granting Gen Xers and those who come after them the freedom to influence the shape of the congregation's tradition

and even to nurture their own spiritual traditions, adopting a 'discipline of dialogue' that encourages members of all generations to try to see things from one another's viewpoint, a commitment of church leaders to protect the elderly from victimisation in the process of reaching the young and through the willingness of Gen Xers to demonstrate respect and consideration toward their elders and the church's willingness to adjust their organisational structures to move from hierarchy to 'heir-archy' and from a culture of control to one of cooperation. These ways also correlate to the practical suggestions given from the participants in the empirical study.

Fundamentalism was described earlier as a habit of mind. The EBCOSA's mind-set may be focussed on maintaining its uniqueness as a denomination but could be thwarting the future of this very denomination if it does not begin the transformational processes recommended. This could be overwhelming within a postmodern context. Transformation becomes habitual for a youth ministry when a unique climate of transformation is established (DeVries, 2008:77). It is important to begin with what the congregation is already doing and brainstorm this (on different age levels: children, youth, parents, leaders). DeVries (ibid: 82-89) advises that congregations can create this culture by identifying small victories or visible results that its youth ministry has accomplished (the shiny eyes mentioned in chapter four). He believes these incremental changes result in exponential change. The only way to impact a stuck system is to maintain a non-anxious presence in it, to do more than just react. Some ways to do this is to integrate the youth into the worship programming and structures of the congregation and align youth with mentors who have similar passions and interests. Create a congregational culture that optimises on adult and youth interaction in all spheres of ministry in and outside of the congregation.

The church of God is called to cultivate a sense of spiritual openness and continual repentance through receiving; to enable its members in remembering through transformational teaching leading to deep awareness of our being a part of God's community; to respond to God through service and to relate to each other as a faith community. The various modes of faith formation proposed and discussed in chapter three assist in this regard. These four components are reflections of what Wilhoit (2008:50) calls true faith formation. In this way the youth, learn from Christ and receive God's enabling grace which helps them discern who they are and whose they are. In a climate most conducive to faith formation; young people are encouraged to use their brokenness and thirst for more to draw them to God and His community (ibid: 58). This climate does not promote pretense and good works but authentic

Christianity. Engagement with the Jesus narrative results in authentic Christian identity even if a person exists outside the ecclesial field of creedal Christianity. Everydayness without transcendence results in existential poverty. Everydayness without transcendence is seeking existential meaning in culture which is permeated by either modern or postmodern values (Dreyer, 2004: 940). According to Brene Brown (2012:2) being vulnerable is not being weak because uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure are part of our daily experience. Disregarding one's vulnerability reveals the true fear and disconnection that people (especially these youth) feel. Wilhoit (2008:66) adds that an important discovery in one's spiritual life is recognizing that life is tough and never measures up to what we expected it to be. It is also important to realize attempts to fix this restlessness will not work until we recognize this vulnerability. The tension between the young person's felt needs and their longing for God will continue even after conversion. They need the support of the church and their families because when they lose the ability or willingness to be vulnerable, joy becomes something they approach with deep foreboding. Young people need love and a sense of belonging and this should come from the faith communities they are in. When they are preached to from a position of guilt and disloyalty, the church crushes their faith, creativity and ability to adapt to change (Brown, 2012: 118 & 154). This necessitates a deep sense of personal and corporate sin, an awareness of the reality of this thirst for God and a deep-seated conviction that spiritual growth will come through grace.

One of the key findings above was that young people cannot articulate their faith. The church has developed the tradition of using Christian language (Christianese) around youth without explaining these to them. Youth have in turn felt that because they cannot grasp this language and even sometimes understand, the Christian faith is not something they can own (Powell, et al, 2013:37-38). Post-modern society has influenced an individualistic spirituality in these youth. This kind of spiritual identity could be described as moving away from a theological understanding to a humanistic view of spirituality. The church cannot assume that youth will merely join the dogmatic positions (core to fundamentalism) Christian churches used to have on life issues. The technological and information era we live in has resulted in these youth being more informed about different religious traditions and life in general from a very early stage of life (Cloete, 2012:72-73). Yust (2004: xxv) notes the importance of creating a religious culture in which the rituals, language and biblical characters of the Bible can be taught to young people and made relevant to their contexts. Part of this culture incorporates teaching youth how to share their faith stories in ways that are intertwined with their lives. In view of the problem of youth not being able to articulate their faith (MTD),

Yust encourages that they be taught the art of speaking, reading and understanding religious language. Teaching biblical truths to youth needs to incorporate an explanation of the contexts out of which these texts or stories were birthed. This helps them position their faith in Scriptural truths. Using case studies that will enable their questioning is helpful because the aims thereof should be helping youth apply biblical truths to the daily challenges they face (Powell, et al, 2013: 40). Some probing questions could be:

- What would it look like to trust God in this situation?
- If you were trusting God what would you do?
- How would you explain your trust in God to others involved?
- What would it look like to doubt God in this situation? Is that bad?
- What would God's perspective on this issue be?

Another finding was that young people are not experiencing the support they need from the adults in their lives. Youth should be exposed to real life examples of others learning to trust God (Powell, et al, 2013:43). The adults in these young people's lives need to understand that the best teaching happens informally when they least expect these youth to be paying attention. Conversations should emphasize the importance of trusting God before obeying Him. In this way youth are taught to first seek God in their situations rather than to merely take our directive advice (ibid: 45). Adult role models should be of different ages because this enables them to see that being a Christian is not restricted to a certain age, dress code or look (ibid: 67). DeVries (2008:143-147) argues that churches usually put youth volunteers in places that are not sustainable resulting in the ability to develop authentic relationships difficult for the youth. Culture has isolated young people from the relationships that are most likely to lead them toward spiritual maturity. These youth need the wisdom of Christian adults who understand the process that faith formation takes in a society that assumes everything is instant. When parents and church leaders abandon their role in helping these youth navigate through the developmental stages they face, these youth turn to friends, music and media as surrogate mentors. This principle also outlives the youth leader because when they leave, the ministry amongst youth and congregants are still in place. The task of Christian education and faith formation can never fall entirely upon professionals because the financial cost would be prohibitive and because we gain much through the process of mutual teaching and learning (Wilhoit, 2008:153).

Youth ministry cannot end at conversion or church membership. A lifestyle focussed on Christlikeness needs to be practiced and cannot be attained (Yaconelli in Dean, 2001:155).

In contrast to a conservative fundamentalist perspective, youth should be encouraged to visit other faith communities whilst exploring their faith. In this way they learn and question the similarities and differences in each of these communities in order to make sound and lasting choices of where they would need to fellowship. Restricting them to only experience one faith community produces little more than a version of religion with Christian limitations. Socialization alongside ecclesial discipleship promotes spiritual growth (Groome, 1980:125). The stories, language, and liturgy of the church must be taught and made accessible in ways that ensures these youth participate. Congregations need to rediscover holistic relational ministry (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 39-40).

Biblical teaching should include how these youth could recover from when they have sinned. This also means that the reality that they will sin after conversion also needs to be taught. A healthy view of repentance teaches young people that their sin actually draws them closer to God instead of away from him (Powell, et al, 2013:43). They need to find safe spaces and people to which they could be accountable to. Teaching should seek to earnestly listen to how youth think and reason about their faith and life circumstances (Powell, et al, 2013: 45). One of the ways to enhance this is through teaching these youth about the importance of confession. Confession is the movement toward humility through seeking integrity before God (Yaconelli in Dean, 2001:159). This allows the vulnerability mentioned earlier. It is about being able to wait and listen for God's voice, blessing and calling. This is crucial in youth ministry because it allows young people the space and time to redirect their emerging identity.

Youth leaders are influential voices in the lives of these youth and such can serve as prophets speaking into the lives of these youth by directing them to Christ as John the Baptist did (Maas in Dean, 2001: 229). It is important to build youth ministry teams. These could include your pastors, parents, other ministerial leaders and even volunteers (Powell, et al, 2013: 191 & DeVries). Youth leaders need to exemplify salvific grace in a performance driven society. This grace is undeserved, God-given, unexpected, irretrievable, costly, begets spiritual gifts and never ends (Nishioka in Dean 2001:243). Accepting, welcoming, remembering, showing solidarity, taking their needs seriously, not showing favouritism and exhibiting self-control are all ways of exemplifying this grace.

Sometimes youth need to re-orientate their faith in order to face the challenges thereof and overcome these. Youth need to learn to be attentive to the ways their faith must change to

overcome suffering and trials (Powell, et al, 2013:66). Faith formation is not about emphasizing one truth at the expense of others (ibid: 51-52). It is about long term obedience and not a quick fix to rebelling youth. It is not about how much spiritual truth the young person gets taught, it is about whether they are able to practice this truth in their daily lives. Faith formation is not about the extent to which the youth feels emotionally close to God but an understanding that through the suffering and pain experienced in one's life, God is still in control. It is not only about the highlights (at a camp or coffee bar) in one's faith journey but the endurance to keep those going. Introspection is important for every believer but when this process leads to over-emphasis on choices and consequences, faith formation becomes a law unto itself. Surrendering to God is not based on ability but on dependence on God. A theology that teaches and shows young people the essence of surrendering to God, abiding in Him and reflecting his character is necessary for youth not only in a South African context but all across the world (Folmsbee, 2007:48). The church (and its leadership) has the responsibility of addressing a biblical view of redemption in which the reality of sin and the fallen state of these youth is realised (Johnson in Dean, 2001:255). They need to understand that through Christ's death, He released them from the sins that cloud their judgements and prevent them from fully serving Him. This mentorship process ignites hope in the lives of these youth.

Faith formation facilitates change when youth are in environments that foster this change as they learn to live out their unique communal calling (Wilhoit, 2008:184). This environment is one that supports and challenges them in ways that causes a healthy interdependence to the church. These youth do not want to feel bound and controlled but included and respected as being partners in God's work. This environment has at its basis; a reverence for God, a respect for the other and a deep sense of mission. Parents should be encouraged to intentionally make time for quality conversations with their children (Powell, et al, 2013: 120). Here the youth are given opportunities to ask the challenging questions they are grappling with. Parents who are Christian could also share how they became Christian. Many parents have noted that they have tried to talk to their teenage children but have not been successful. The way this is done is crucial. Powell, Griffiths and Crawford recommend that parents learn how to listen to and not lecture their children (ibid: 125). The church can play a vital role in educating and assisting parents in their task as spiritual leaders, especially with regards to their children because the church never take over the role and responsibility of the parents, but needs to support the parents' role as primary educators of the youth (Cloete,

2012: 6). It could get involved in equipping parents with young people on different levels like updating them on youth culture, give them practical examples of things to do and talk about, getting parents involved in the youth ministry, and helping them develop their own faith formation rituals. This family based youth ministry model requires time. It is the caring attentiveness of the older generation to the younger that is likely to make the most significant difference in their lives (DeVries in Dean, 2001: 152-154). The 5:1 ratio mentioned earlier would also assist in families where the parents are not Christian.

#### 5.4.2 For Practical theology

Practical theological interpretation is deeply contextual and thinks in terms of interconnections, relationships and systems. It creates a bridge between the academy and the church and also between academic disciplines (Osmer, 2008:17). These attributes have guided the researcher during this study. Faith formation of youth within a specific evangelical context has been reflected upon through contextual factors which have sought to bridge the gap between academia and practice. Chapter one of this dissertation cautioned the reader that this research study in no way claims to exhaust the study of practical theology. Youth ministry as an area of specialization within this academic discipline was focussed on.

Gerben Heitnik (1999) described practical theology as an empirically orientated theory of action. It is a descriptive and critically constructive way of addressing ecclesial practices within culture and society and also within individual life. Heitink described practical theology as an interdisciplinary approach aimed at renewed action addressing the realities people face within their faith. As such, practical theology is theology for the church which implies a Christian audience and should not be confused with the praxis itself. Don Browning (1991) agrees that practical theology dialogues with Christian sources in order to assist social and individual transformation. Some of these Christian sources include pastoral instruments, skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes (Van der Ven, 1993) developed to enhance the work of the church internally and within society. This results in practical theology creating spaces of communication between the Christian faith and other faiths. Through these spaces, theological reflections on human and divine action assist in discerning and articulating ways that the church could respond. The vision of practical theology has broadened from a primary focus on ecclesial clergy and the church to include the context of everyday life on a local, national and global level. A public practical theology includes the public as one of the

audiences of practical theology; to include everyday concerns and issues in its reflection and facilitates dialogue between theology and contemporary culture (Dreyer, 2004: 919-920 & Van der Ven, 1998:x-xi).

Kenda Creasy Dean and Andrew Root (2011) describe practical theology as the heart of youth ministry because it gives youth ministry the language required to build the relationships so integral to young people and also with which to teach these youth the Christian principles they yearn for. From this perspective, it is assumed that young people are called to take part in every practice of Christian community in the total mission (including South Africa) of the church (Dean, 2001:19). Theological reflection keeps youth ministry practice focussed on God instead of on their leadership. This reflection has to be intentional. Embedded theology, on the other hand, comes from the religions they inherit from their faith communities (ibid: 29). Practical theologians from a number of denominations therefore are focusing more attention on the importance of faith formation in the home (Bunge, 2008: 349). This requires a well-developed theological communication theory, and a practical-theological perspective on ecclesiology, anthropology and agogics which incorporates important relationships these youth have. Youth ministry involves comprehensive, intentional and differentiated communicative actions in service of the Gospel of the Kingdom in order to empower effective ministry among youth. (Nel, 2003:68 & 71-72). Discussing post- modern youth, Dreyer (2004:933) notes that the creedal descriptions of faith by the church have been substituted with the personal convictions of these youth. The church's formulation of faith in an ontological personal God creates the space for faith in a functional God as Spirit. These youth are spiritual, but have departed from the church embracing this spirituality differently to previous generations. Young people are involved with religious experience, form their own images and ideas, but do not find themselves in the structures and norms of the church. The gap between institutionalised religion and the public religiosity of the youth is becoming wider.

Any practical theology concerned with the formation and transformation of persons in Christian community needs to consider the value of developmental theories to the faith formation process (especially with reference to youth). This is because practical theology is primarily concerned with the effective and faithful formation and transformation of people in relationship with God resulting in them growing in their faith (Fowler in Dykstra & Parks, 1986: 297- 299). Cloete (2012:70 & 73) describes faith formation (referenced as spiritual formation) as a contextual process of meaning making and integration of what we believe into

how we live our lives. Through this process young people become more like Jesus in their way of living through the work of the Holy Spirit. This formation is integral to youth ministry, not as something that we can accomplish through the ministry, but of which we are a part of and in service of. Faith formation gives an opportunity to youth ministry to nurture youth in their distinct developmental phase. Chapter three concluded by stressing the importance of not placing too much emphasis on developmental theories at the expense of formational processes happening during these stages.

Youth ministry is a comprehensive area of ministry. Young people constitute part of the whole body of Christ and being young does not make them less important. Their needs may be differentiated and they may need ministry to be addressed in a more focussed manner, but their needs are not fewer. Therefore, although this group is unique they cannot be separated from the rest of the faith community. They are however in need of the kerygma (preaching); of paraklesis (pastoral care); the leitourgia (worship), koinonia (fellowship of believers); the diakonia (diaconate); the kybernesis (administration) and the marturia (mission). This requires a biblical perspective of youth in which the relational covenantal nature of the work of the Triune God, the (somatic) ecclesiological nature of the coming of God to his people (the church) and to his world, the hermeneutical function of the natural family and of the larger family of God, the agogical function of the body of believers in the becoming of children and in fact of the whole body of Christ and the teleological dimension of the Kingdom come and coming is taken into account (Nel, 2003: 76).

As noted in chapter one, practical theological interpretation facilitates the congregation's participation in the three-fold office of Christ. This interpretation relies on a holistic use of Scripture that acknowledges the interrelatedness of the Old and New Testament. Biblical texts for spiritual growth like 1 Samuel 2:26 (and Luke 2:52)<sup>117</sup> teaches how Samuel and Christ as young men, grew in their faith amidst the hypocrisy and religious pluralism of their time. Both these youth actively sought God and through this grew in wisdom and favour with God. They grew morally and spiritually. Imitating Christ goes beyond adhering to spiritual rituals and traditions (Wilhoit, 2008: 41-42). Becoming Christ-like includes loving and obeying God and each other; being a steward of the gospel by sharing this gospel, practicing discernment, having integrity, using money wisely, practicing detachment; showing compassion through praying for and blessing others, keeping relational

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<sup>117</sup> Other references include Colossians 4:19, Galations 4:19, Ephesians 4:13, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Matthew 6 & 13, Mark 10 and John 6.

commitments, reaching out to the poor and marginalized, handling conflict well and forgiving one another, extending hospitality, worship and right thinking about God through depending more and more on Him and His grace, practicing the spiritual modes, daily repentance and commitment to a life of learning (ibid: 47-49). This encompasses a holistic approach to youth ministry in which this three-fold office of Christ is taken seriously.

#### 5.4.3 Youth ministry among evangelicals in South Africa

The importance of the process of inculturation cannot be neglected in youth ministry. Church history has revealed that Evangelical fundamentalists resorted to an exclusivist approach to youth ministry in which personal conversion and Bible study were prioritised above all else. Post-modern youth are impacted by local and global cultural changes which impact how they understand their faith. This research study was introduced in chapter one by referring to statistics from the South African youth risk behaviour survey conducted in 2008. Reflection on these youth statistics as relevant to the findings of this study is considered at this point. The empirical study (and the three studies compared above) revealed alcohol usage and teenage pregnancy as two of the risk behaviours that impacted the faith formation of the youth being investigated. The College Transition Project confirmed this relationship. Chapter one also described South African youth as highly religious with church attendance being prioritized. This study has confirmed this and also added various other church practices that youth are involved in on a regularly basis. One of the findings has been that there is a fast growing decline in youth ministry and youth leaders in the EBCOSA. This is unfortunately a reflection of what is happening in many traditional churches in South Africa. Youth are being drawn to the fast growing mega churches where they feel better ministered to. Youth leaders feel ill equipped for the dynamic task they have. Chapter one confirmed this by noting the decline in staff from Faith Based Organizations. Many of these organizations are linked to a church and as such experience many similar challenges (unless internationally funded). There is an increasing drive towards the social cohesion of South African youth because of the destructive behaviours they participate in. This study has confirmed that the church through faith formation processes can contribute to this process because of the inseparable link between identity, moral and faith formation.

Writing from a missiological perspective, Nel (2010:15-16), that faith formation processes with young people are essentially missional in South Africa's diversity of youth

experiences, meanings and backgrounds. The youth in this country are not merely following universal patterns of development (as important as they are), but are themselves engaging critically with social processes in specific and varied ways. As noted earlier, identity, moral and faith formation of these youth includes enabling these youth to own their faith by appropriating and articulating an understanding of the gospel in their own voices, thus forging a particular missional identity, expressed and embodied through the youth's own missionary self-images. As agents of change in a post-apartheid South Africa, these youth are no longer merely the objects or empty receivers of the well-meaning projects, ministry and outreach of adults, the church or experts, but have themselves become agents of their own contextual missional theologies, communicated through new images. Nel (ibid) adds that youth are already contemplating theological discourses in efforts to discern and to retell their faith narratives through engaging in and constructing meaning in their contexts of transformation. Youth in mission becomes youth doing missional theology. Leaders, parents, churches and theologians need to discern these emerging youth theologies in personal dialogue with these youth themselves, as they negotiate and express them through their own metaphors, symbols, rituals, signs, and narratives.

Malan Nel (1998), traced youth ministry in South Africa to a time when youth were already living and working outside their homes (industrial revolution). During this time, Sunday Schools placed strong emphasis on transferring manners and morals to these youth who did not learn these from their families. This was also a time when the need for youth leaders to guide these youth became evident. At the time youth development work was not considered the work of the church but pastoral care to these youth was. This has changed in a post-modern context. Faith based organizations are also involved in youth development work. As youth became an established and recognised group in society, their way of living and new ideas as part of the youth subculture were seen both as sources of social change and as a potential threat to the existing social order (Cloete, 2012: 2). The reality in South Africa is that the divisions, conflicting presuppositions and contradictory worldviews that divided the country in the past, continue to undermine the present. The most recent government elections in South Africa (May, 2014) marked the year that the first generation born after the apartheid regime (post 1994) could democratically vote. All of these youth have not been physically involved in the apartheid struggles but many have still feel the after effects thereof through their families. Faith formation of these youth is highly impacted by the South African Education system in schools because school is where many of these youth spend their time. South Africa's new educational policy for teaching and learning about religion is inclusive,

enabling learners to explore their own identities within the diversity of South Africa. Departing from the compulsory Christian religious indoctrination of the apartheid era, the new policy proposes educational outcomes in teaching and learning about religious diversity that promote empathetic understanding and critical reflection on religious identity and difference. In the old regime, religious education was directed towards compelling learners to make a confession of faith. (Chidester, 2003: 264). The church and its youth ministry have to help young people to establish the truth about their history and to help them on their journey towards reconciliation. It is essential if we are to put the past behind us and move forward without becoming prisoners of pain, anger and bitterness. Storytelling is a powerful medium to use for young people. It gives them an opportunity to be human in the modern electronic age we live in. In this regard, it also gives young people the opportunity to fit into, and be creative in the world they live in. It gives them a chance to think and feel. Young people feel that when they tell their story others listen to them. The power of storytelling is not just an individual process, but also a collective one (Thesnaar, 2003:21). Practical ways to implement this process would be create a safe space for sharing, reflection on the past through honesty, helping the young people focus on their own past and through group interaction through some creative exercise (ibid: 23). Once young and old know the truth, they can begin to put the past behind them and move with hope towards a peaceful future (ibid: 18-20).

The distress experienced by the youth in a country such as South Africa at this point in history is not only problematic, but lodges an urgent request for new practice theories. In the current South African context this comment is of more than academic significance. The timeous but radical changes of the early-90s have far-reaching implications for the youth of this country, and their consequences will be felt for many years to come. Youth ministry in this country will have to integrate ways of addressing the social challenges these youth face alongside their faith formation process (Nel, 2003: 75-76). According to Swart and Yates (2012: 5) another reality to be faced is the negative way in which Africa and its youth are often portrayed by the media to the outside world. These negative perceptions about Africa have had such an impact that they have become entrenched in African culture, religion, science, philosophy and history. In contrast, Western culture has mostly been portrayed in a favourable light and associated with freedom, justice, equality and emancipation.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The normative task of practical theological interpretation is accomplished in this chapter by discussing ethical norms and models of good practice gained from three similar studies; the National Study of Youth and Religion, College Transition Project and the Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth Project on youth faith formation. Comparisons appropriate for the EBCOSA in relation to the research findings from the empirical study were highlighted. These studies confirm that the Christian faith that post-modern youth portray is detached from a biblical theology of the crucifixion. These youth accommodate other faith traditions at the expense of fully understanding and grappling with their own. Rituals and rites of passage were found important to helping youth externalize their faith in daily life spaces. These studies also confirmed the importance of the relationship between faith, identity and morality and socialization for a holistic faith formation process. The chapter focussed on developing a practical theology on youth faith formation from an evangelical South African perspective. Considerations for a broader Protestant evangelical perspective, a dispensational fundamentalistic theological paradigm and church praxis within the EBCOSA were made. A call for the EBCOSA to reconsider its broader evangelical heritage was made. Adherence to a dispensational fundamentalism also requires careful reflection on the ways in which this theological perspective was passed down to the EBCOSA in order for it to faithfully teach its youth what it means to be evangelical in a post-modern context. The faith traditions of the EBCOSA need to be reformulated and reinterpreted in such a way that each new generation can find answers to the questions of their time and place. A call to an intergenerational youth ministry culture in which the parents of these youth (Gen X), youth leaders and other adults in the faith community are engaged in passing down a Christ-like faith was also made in this chapter. This chapter encouraged a public practical theology addressing the daily concerns and issues of youth. This type of theology facilitates dialogue between theology and contemporary youth culture. Youth are called to take part in every practice of Christian community in the total mission of the church. The chapter concluded with a reflection of what youth ministry among evangelicals in South Africa should look like as a result of this study. Youth ministry that takes the youth of this country seriously, takes the spiritual and numerical decline of young people in evangelical faith community seriously. A missional approach to youth along with a public practical theology of youth has been encouraged. This approach acknowledges the agency of youth within their faith formation and also within the developments of this country. This approach also takes the biblical mandate of the church towards its youth, family and societal culture seriously.

The pragmatic task of practical theological interpretation is accomplished in chapter six by reflecting on the strategies of action mentioned throughout this dissertation that will assist the EBCOSA in achieving its desired goals for its youth ministry.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY**

#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter one described the pragmatic task as the task of practical theological interpretation that assists denominations in addressing how they may proceed after exploring what its key problems are. It is this task that specifies the strategies of action necessary to attain the desired goals the denomination may have. The first task of practical theological interpretation (descriptive-empirical) is based on problems picked up during this last (pragmatic) task (Osmer, 2008:10). This task is guided by the purpose of the EBCOSA through its vision, mission and constitution. It aims at helping the EBCOSA is assessing whether its mission has been carried out through reflecting on the necessary structures and resources it has with reference to youth ministry. The church, as the body of Christ should be the embodiment of Christ through exhibiting servant leadership. This leadership is exemplified through relationships of mutual care and service, no hierarchical inequalities and through having a relationship with those not part of the body (ibid: 190). This chapter aims at assisting the EBCOSA and possibly faith communities facing similar challenges in its commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission amongst the youth of South Africa.

The main research findings of this study are listed according to relevant categories in this chapter. Various strategies of action have been mentioned throughout chapters three, four and five of this dissertation. These are reflected on with the aim of making specific recommendations for the EBCOSA (as the focused case of this study), for youth ministry within evangelical contexts in South Africa and for further research within the field of youth ministry as a discipline within Practical Theology.

#### 6.2 Practical implications of this research study

The research findings and recommendations gained from this study are applicable to one case; the EBCOSA. The relevance of these findings could be applicable to other

denominations with the same research question in mind, same membership size and same geographical contexts within South Africa.<sup>118</sup>

### 6.2.1 The contextual implications for the EBCOSA

These findings are discussed with relevance to how they practically impact the EBCOSA context specifically, other evangelical faith communities and also academia.

#### 6.2.1.1 A context for Evangelical fundamentalism

Evangelical fundamentalism has been associated as a world-wide phenomenon which is deeply conditioned by the break-up of colonial empires and the founding of new democratic nations. It thrives in contexts in which people are faced with poverty, misery, illiteracy and oppressive rule such as South Africa. This is specifically relevant to understanding how the EBCOSA adopted this theological perspective.

#### 6.2.1.2 Lack of corporate and national EBCOSA involvement

The empirical study revealed that the EBCOSA may be involved in the faith formation of its youth on an individual and local basis but this is not true on a corporate and national level. An intergenerational church culture needs to be established or restored through a youth ministry that create spaces of dialogue and intergenerational contact that counter this individualistic approach and foster Christian faith formation which is community oriented.

#### 6.2.1.3 Detrimental effects of a dualistic approach to Christianity

The reality of a dualistic approach to Christianity has been evidenced in this study. Many youth could not reconcile their lives at school, at sporting events and at family outings (fishing or camping) with their lives at church. Youth do not know how to describe their Christian faith and they do not know what it biblically entails. Chapter three revealed that youth do not internalize the beliefs and practices passed onto them because they do not see any relevance for their lives and spiritual growth. External conformity can be masked to look

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<sup>118</sup> The findings listed in this chapter are birthed out of the literature sourced and cited in chapters four and five of this dissertation. These sources are not repeated here.

as though these youth conform but they are actually seeking approval and recognition within the church. Perhaps too much emphasis on church doctrine has added to this attitude.

#### 6.2.1.4 Youth leadership in EBCOSA<sup>119</sup>

The age of youth leadership in the EBCOSA has gradually become younger and less qualified because they fall into a generation of youth that have not been equipped (because the church deemed them as the church of tomorrow).

### 6.2.2 The ecclesial implications for evangelical faith communities in South Africa

#### 6.2.2.1 The importance of identity, moral and faith development theories

All three developmental stage theories (moral, identity and faith) relevant to fourteen to seventeen years old have been evidenced as are relevant to the faith formation of these youth. Faith development was confirmed as only one aspect of faith formation. All these theories are embedded within the moral formation of these youth. This study confirmed that youth faith formation cannot be studied without careful consideration concerning the moral formation of these youth. These theories inform the church's approaches to and teaching on faith formation. Faith formation interacts with, yet is distinct from, moral and faith development and it is also a core construct of identity formation.

#### 6.2.2.2 Influential factors on faith formation

The family, ecclesial and societal communities and also the cultures of these youth were found as influential (positive and negative) to the faith formation of the youth studied. Christian families are not a guaranteed safe space for effective faith formation. The youth in this study reported that they did not necessarily feel better supported by Christian family than those who came from non-Christian families. The non-Christian family context could be more supportive of these youth faith formation practices but can have a negative impact on the

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<sup>119</sup> The researcher is aware that leadership in this denomination is predominantly male. This has been the faith tradition of the EBCOSA who do not believe in female pastors yet do have females in Sunday School teacher roles. This study has not focussed on the role of women in this denomination but reference to the lack of female leaders in youth ministry particularly is noted. The researcher would encourage that the role of women in youth ministry be taken seriously when developing its youth ministry in the way forward. Perhaps an evangelical biblical feminist perspective in which the rights and roles of men and women in marriage and ministry is understood as equal would be best suited to this context. This views respects and adheres to the inerrancy and authority of Scripture (Gallagher, 1999; 2004; 2005; Scholer, D, 1987). The researcher would recommend this as an introductory approach to be explored further.

actual faith formation processes (sanctification, spiritual growth) of these youth. Christians who pretend had a louder voice than family who is not Christian in this study. The positive impact that pastors are has on the faith formation of youth was assuring. Many youth reported that they have had pastors walk alongside them and their families whilst wrestling with their faith.

#### 6.2.2.1.1 Factors that enhance young people's faith

Having relational support from peers, pastors, youth leaders and family, having an attitude that is open to the reality of trials and not always feeling close to God, understanding the difference between owning their faith and adherence to church practice were all factors found that enhance the faith of the youth in this study. The reality that non-Christian parents can be supportive towards their Christian children was also deemed important.

#### 6.2.2.1.2 Factors that hinder young people's faith

Factors that hinder the faith of the youth in this study are; peer pressure linked to low self-image and an inability to confide in their parents, feeling rejected by the church and God and the reality that even Christian parents can hinder their faith by not being consistent in the way they live at home and at church.

#### 6.2.2.3 The importance of an older generation

The study revealed that the EBCOSA's big problems have merged amidst a materialistic and compromising older generation that they have looked up to as an example. This was found similar to the American case studies in which the heritage of these youth has not been the Christ-like example they expect these youth to be.

#### 6.2.2.4 The importance of diverse voices

The importance of exposing youth to different viewpoints within the safe environments for them to wrestle with their faith appropriately was confirmed in this study. Traditionally, the EBCOSA has been exclusivist by not encouraging this interaction with other churches and youth groups. Character formation cannot be dictated by fixed values and behaviour patterns but should take seriously the paradox of self-concern, concern for the other and caring for what is significant and caring for the significance of the other. Young people need to be confronted with the plurality of values, beliefs and cultures they encounter daily and should not be coerced into only one perspective to the situation.

#### 6.2.2.5 The importance of costly sacrifice

Faith formation that takes the discipleship of these youth seriously must move beyond MTD (especially as foreclosed youth). It must reshape their priorities towards a costly sacrifice in which they are transformed daily through in life in Christ.

#### 6.2.2.6 The importance of the young people's faith stories

This study has confirmed that young people's personal faith stories are often not taken seriously because these stories do not look like that of the adults. These youth are also often not included in public discourse (of which the church is part of) despite their role within this discourse.

#### 6.2.2.7 Young people are open to other religions

This research study confirmed that young people (fourteen to seventeen years old) tend to be eclectic about their faith where religion is concerned. The relationship between faith and morality was also confirmed in the youth's openness and respect for other faith traditions at the expense of fully understanding and grappling with their own.

### 6.2.3 Academic implications for faith formation studies

#### 6.2.3.1 Faith as a process toward spiritual growth

This research study has described faith as knowledge, relational, internalised belief, a personal experience based on a commitment of mind will and emotions and as a process of inquiry and transformation through justification, sanctification and vocation. It has confirmed faith as a process toward spiritual growth. The empirical study confirmed spiritual growth and discipleship (how the EBCOSA understands faith formation) as the ongoing and consistent process evidenced through a Christ-like lifestyle and the types of choices made.

#### 6.2.3.2 Faith formation is aimed at Christlikeness

All the terms (spiritual growth and maturity, discipleship, spiritual formation) and modes (prayer, worship, Bible study, youth groups, partaking in sacraments, confirmation) of faith formation have been evidenced as relevant to the faith formation of the youth in this study. This study revealed that these terms all aim at Christlikeness in which a character embodying the fruit of the Spirit and Christian service become part of the young person's lifestyle. All these emphasize the importance of relationships (self, church, family and other).

#### 6.2.3.3 Faith development is only one aspect of faith formation

The theoretical and empirical data accumulated in this research study indicate that faith development is only one aspect of faith formation when studying fourteen to seventeen year old youth

#### 6.2.3.4 The relationship between identity, morality and faith

The interdependent relationship of faith, identity and morality has probably been the most precedent in this research study. The faith of the fourteen to seventeen year old youth is intertwined with their identity as young people; how they make choices and behave (morality) and also how they are developing physically and cognitively. The youth in this study are at the stage of foreclosed identity and spiritual growth which means that they need the supportive influence of authentic Christian adults in their lives. Young people are searching for adults who are authentic in how they live their faith. Very few of the young people in this study have achieved an identity in which they have committed to a set of beliefs, values and standards of your own. This could be associated to an in which experimentation and questioning is still a large part of their lives.

#### 6.2.3.5 Moral formation as integral to faith formation

The modes and processes of faith formation were found implicit within moral formation. This empirical study confirmed the value that music, Scripture memory, visitation and interaction around Scripture (through technology like Facebook, through group work and inviting others to church) have on the spiritual growth of youth.

#### 6.3 Limitations of this research study

Osmer (ibid: 26-28) views leadership as a communal effort in which all the voices within the community are considered as influential in addressing the challenges it faces. The empirical study included the voices of the youth, their youth leaders and also the pastors as representatives (because only a sample was chosen) of the EBCOSA. A possible limitation of this study could be that it has not included the voices of the parents of these youth.

This research study revealed a significant variation in the quality of the data from each of the three types of participants in the study, with the majority of data coming from pastors and youth leaders rather than the youth.

The research study used aspects of ethnography and case study methodologies. It is certain that better results could be found had these been employed in their fullest capacities.

This research study was compared with three others in chapter five. The similarities in these studies were used as motivation for comparing these but not all the possible variations thereof were considered.

#### 6.4 Recommendations from this research study

The following recommendations are made in view of the all four practical theological tasks (descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic) in mind. The practical implications discussed in this chapter serve as an outline of the main outcomes of this research study. The three world framework of Johan Mouton (2001) was used to specify where the research problem was birthed, how it could be investigated within academia and how this research study can contribute to the broader science of practical theology, with youth

ministry as a discipline. It is with this framework in mind that the recommendations are made on three levels.

#### 6.4.1 To the EBCOSA

##### 6.4.1.1 The need for transformational leadership

Successful implementation of the pragmatic task requires transformational leadership who are willing to take risks on behalf of the congregation in order to help it better embody its mission as a sign and witness of God's self-giving love (Osmer, 2008:9). The specified strategies of action recommended in this study are aimed at assisting the EBCOSA in achieving its desired goals for its youth ministry. The vision of the EBCOSA (described in chapter two) aims at participating in God's mission by making Him known to all nations and peoples of the world by proclamation of Jesus Christ as only Savior and Lord without compromising its evangelical fundamentals. Its mission includes crossing every human and earthly barrier in order to challenge those things that hinder the faith formation of its members. It aims to do this by organizing, equipping, mobilizing and supporting all (including its youth) who respond to faith in Jesus Christ and through modelling biblical love, righteousness, justice, forgiveness, hope and peace for all men and women, boys and girls in a world divided and torn by sin and evil (Revised Constitution, 2008:5).

##### 6.4.1.2 The need for relevant biblical teaching

This research study described the EBCOSA as a church who prides itself in its adherence to Scripture. Youth identity is formed through the reactions and responses of those around them. Youth are not only trying to discover an individual identity but also a communal one. Identity formation, just as faith and moral formation is a lifelong process. Since most of the youth in this research study are at a foreclosed identity, they present like they have it all together at youth group and are also the ones most likely to be given leadership positions at church. A church that does not invest in teaching its youth biblical principles could hinder them from growing into who they are meant to be in Christ because they depend on the relationships with peers, parents and youth leaders to guide them in their journey as Christians.

Part of the EBCOSA's biblical teaching should incorporate a grounded (relevance for daily life) theology of grace, sanctification, justification, redemption, repentance and hope for

a theology of youth ministry. The reality of trials and suffering of a Christian and the mystery of faith (that they will not always find answers to their questions) needs to be taught as part of the faith formation process. Young people should be empowered to critically reflect on traditional church patterns, values, beliefs, symbols, traditions and worldviews if they are to own their faith and take responsibility for it

#### 6.4.1.3 Create opportunities for spiritual growth

If faith is acknowledged as a process toward spiritual growth, spiritual nurture should be an ongoing focus of the church in which multiple opportunities for spiritual growth is given. Sunday schools and youth group are viewed as two ministerial drivers in this tradition but these should not become the limitations in which youth are to grow in their faith. An important part of spiritual maturity is recognizing, acknowledging and using one's spiritual gifts. The fullness of the Spirit is reached as control is to be yielded to Holy Spirit. This means that the believer becomes intentional about growing in their faith How has EBCOSA intentionally encouraged this?

#### 6.4.1.4 Agreement as to the state of youth ministry in EBCOSA

The transformational leaders required calls for agreement on the state of the youth ministry of this denomination. The leadership and members must agree that its youth ministry is indeed in crisis and work towards transformation from this point. Unless this corporate acknowledgement takes place, the decline will continue. Grace and holistic discipleship are indispensable in contemplating the way forward for the youth ministry of the EBCOSA. It is important to begin with what the congregation is already doing and brainstorm this (on different age levels: children, youth, parents, leaders). This can be done by identifying small victories or visible results that its youth ministry has accomplished (the shiny eyes mentioned in chapter four).

#### 6.4.1.5 The need for relevant youth ministry structures

There is an emergence of good leadership in the EBCOSA but these leaders often lack the resources necessary to meet the challenges they face (Tunncliffe in Horton & Horton, 2006: 583). The research findings of this study indicate that one of the challenges that the EBCOSA faces in responding to its young members is that it lacks the necessary accountability structures for its youth ministry. These structures include the provision of

youth ministry resources; policies on the appointment of youth leaders; equipping the young adults to mentor the younger youth and employing a national youth director and local youth pastors. It is the researcher's recommendation that the thesis and dissertations of DeBeer, Matham and Weber along with the letters from Jacobs, Saville and Johanneson are revisited in intentionally re-establishing its youth ministry.

#### 6.4.1.6 Inclusion of youth ministry in the EBCOSA constitution

Sunday school, youth or women as focus areas of ministry is not mentioned in the constitution of the EBCOSA. It implies that the church would model Christian principles to boys and girls are noted under the vision of this revised constitution but how this is to be implemented is not elaborated on. No mention of youth or children is made in this Constitution. It is also recommended that this Constitution is revised in light of the above-mentioned suggestion.

#### 6.4.1.7 Develop youth mentorship

The need in this denomination for youth mentors was confirmed by the suggestion to involve young adults in supporting these youth. Clarity on the age, role, qualifications and mentorship of youth leaders or youth pastors was deemed necessary for the efficient functioning of youth ministry with regards to the vision and mission.

#### 6.4.1.8 Re-dress Generation X

One of the findings of this study was also the importance of re-engaging Generation X, which is a call to minister to the parents of the present youth. This is crucial for the current church and also for a sustained youth ministry.

#### 6.4.1.9 Develop relevant modes of faith formation

Some of the ways the EBCOSA could develop its youth ministry would be to include, introducing them to good examples, including them in service projects and teaching them financial responsibility, helping them explore what their gifts and talents are and how this can influence their career choices and lastly, listen to their opinions on life and how they experience it. It is also important to teach youth the importance of silence and reflection when hearing the voice of God in their lives.

Youth understand God through the person of Jesus Christ. Stories about and faith traditions explaining the life of Jesus as an example for them to follow is important for their spiritual growth. Traditional African cultures prioritize oral narratives like storytelling in passing on the faith because investing in youth is imperative as they are gifts from ancestors.

#### 6.4.1.10 The need for the inculturation of youth faith formation processes

Traditional African cultures set a good example of the Deuteronomy 6 principle in which adolescence (fourteen to seventeen) is understood as a time in which adults pass on practical knowledge about culture and also life skills (cooking, hunting, etc.) to its youth. Attaining the blessing of the ancestors is respected here as well.

The EBCOSA needs to do all possible to engage these youth, helping them understand the meaning of the delinquent behaviours they are involved in and pointing them to the redemptive and transformative message of the cross.

#### 6.4.2 For youth ministry within an evangelical South African context

##### 6.4.2.1 Familiarity with what the South African government has implemented

The Community Agency for Social Enquiry and Joint Enrichment Project (1993) discussed in chapter one have embarked on getting families more involved in its youth work projects (Morrow, et al, 2005:v- 35). Life skills are being stressed within the framework of a holistic approach to the development of young people with an emphasis on creating awareness and skilling youth to cope with the multiple challenges. The following strategy has been proposed in this regard (and there are many others):

- Opportunities should be made available for young people to affirm their worth by drawing on the resources of the cultures with which they identify.
- Young people should be valued through forums for them to participate in decision and policy-making in a meaningful way, and opportunities for them to interact with each other and with other generations.
- Specifically, youth should have greater opportunities to interact with government, particularly at local government level, to participate in and shape community priorities and service delivery.
- The frequent media misrepresentations of youth and youth culture should be tempered balanced approach encouraged.

- Young people in South Africa create and use remarkable and varied networks. On one level, churches, mosques, temples and synagogues are prominent. Young people from all social backgrounds participate in large numbers in religious observance and in the social networks that accompany this. Indeed, religious observance, always strong in South Africa, seems to be undergoing a revival in which young people are playing a prominent part. Religious organisations therefore present an important platform for youth engagement and youth participation in issues of social and environmental concern.
- Young people interact with the world from a background of supportive families, and government is attempting to strengthen this fundamental social element. The Department of Social Development launched the Integrated National Family Policy in 2005 to support the basic needs of families and make resources available, where necessary, for their systematic rebuilding. The Department of Correctional Services' recent White Paper (2005) also rests on fostering family and community cohesion as primary mechanisms to discourage crime.

This study has confirmed the ecclesial, familial and societal voices in the faith formation of fourteen to seventeen year old in this country. All the above-mentioned recommendations should be incorporated into the broader youth development strategies of South Africa. The faith community and theological enterprises definitely have a role to play in these strategies as they are interconnected to the ecclesial ministries offered.

#### 6.4.2.2 Contextualize Christian education

Youth ministry has been practiced in South Africa since the industrial revolution. Its roots were grounded the same way youth ministry developed in other parts of the world (America and United Kingdom). Christian education was and should still be a core component of youth ministry in this country. The transmission of this education should take seriously the faith formation processes and influential factors discussed in this study.

#### 6.4.2.3 Professionalization of youth work

Youth ministry as a profession has been formalised in many first world countries but is under threat at the moment. International budget constraints have placed pressure on this as a church-based profession. South Africa has been in the process of professionalizing youth ministry (referred to as youth work in this context) for more than a decade now. One of the

reasons for the delay has been the insufficiency of the academia attached to this field. Few accredited institutions in this country take youth ministry as an academic discipline seriously enough to offer accredited programmes therein. This is changing. Youth ministry as an academic discipline in its own right has gained momentum in youth work portfolio of the country and also in academic institutions. For many years, youth ministry practice in this country has been informed by international literature and programs. This is changing as youth ministry as an academic discipline is growing in this country.

Chapter two of this study mentioned that youth development work was seen as the work of voluntary youth workers and pastoral care to youth was seen as the work of the congregation. This is no longer the case in a post-apartheid South Africa. Communities are suffering because of the risk behaviours of its youth. The gap between institutionalised religion and the public religiosity of the youth is becoming wider. The church as part of these communities is biblically mandated to get involved in the social issues of this country. Youth ministry in this country will have to integrate ways of addressing the social challenges these youth face alongside their faith formation process.

#### 6.4.3 For further research

The research study was introduced by stating the brevity of faith formation research. The researcher noted the importance of selecting a specific context in which this study would be conducted. She also cautioned that this was not a study on the church as the body of Christ (or church history) in South Africa nor is it a study on youth development in South Africa. The recommendations for further research below should be considered against this background and also with the limitations of this study expressed in mind.

##### 6.4.3.1 Further exploration of the modes of faith formation

The effect and meaning of the modes of faith formation are mentioned and discussed briefly but can be studied independently as relevant to youth faith formation. Baptism has been a recurring mode in the EBCOSA's spiritual growth process and theological framework. A further exploration of these modes could be how many of these youth have gone through and understand the value of this ordinance in their faith formation process (and not merely for

the EBCOSA). Many of the youth interviewed in this study attend the youth ministries of the EBCOSA but have mentioned that they are not members thereof (attend other churches). Membership has been described as the ritual in which one is found suitable for service within this context. Perhaps this could be one of the reasons these youth are not welcomed as ministry partners?

#### 6.4.3.2 Further exploration of each of the influential factors on youth faith formation

The research question posed in this dissertation has aimed at understanding the factors that hinder and enhance the faith development of youth. The factors discovered in this research study are mentioned and explained to some extent but each of these could be considered as individual research studies within practical theology. A critical and deeper reflection on the impact that family or church or culture has on the faith formation of youth should be investigated further especially in a South African context in which family studies are being prioritised.

#### 6.4.3.3 The correlation of African traditional practices with the faith formation modes

Discovering the important role traditional African culture has on the faith formation of youth has opened up the possibility for a deeper look at various traditional practices within Africa. These can be explored through investigating its theological impact on faith formation of youth.

### 6.5 Conclusion

The pragmatic task of practical theological interpretation is accomplished in this chapter by reflecting on the accumulated strategies of action mentioned throughout this dissertation with the hope that these will assist the EBCOSA in achieving its desired goals for its youth ministry. The vision and mission statement of the EBCOSA, the thesis' from Matham and DeBeer, the letters from members and the practical suggestions made by participants of this research study expressed these goals. Key research findings of this study have been mentioned in the practical implications listed here. Recommendations to the EBCOSA, academics and practitioners of youth ministry in South Africa and to the discipline of practical theology have been made. Any research involving a specific group as a case will have its limitations because not all findings can be applicable to all contexts. These limitations and recommendations for further research were made. It is the hope of the

researcher that the findings of this study will serve as a resource to the EBCOSA and others in the field of youth ministry research.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY**

#### 7.1 Introduction

This research study set out to explore what the ecclesial, familial and societal influences on the faith formation of young people within the EBCOSA are. An empirical and theoretical investigation through the use of an ethnographic approach to understanding this denomination within a South African context was implored. Personal observations, individual and focus group interviews were used as methods of data collection. An extensive literature study on the faith formation of fourteen to seventeen years old youth was also conducted. This research study was conducted within the discipline of practical theology using four tasks (descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, pragmatic) of practical theological interpretation alongside an inter-disciplinary three worlds (everyday life, academic science and meta-science) framework to delineate its research boundaries.

##### 7.1.1 Reflection on the research problem & question

The research problem addressed in this study was related to the heritage of youth ministry passed down from missionaries to the EBCOSA (World one of Mouton) and also to youth ministry as an academic discipline not being taken seriously (World two). Research conducted on the EBCOSA revealed that missionaries did not empower this denomination for youth ministry because of varying perceptions of youth among its founding missionaries. Lack of concern for and teaching regarding youth faith formation has become a growing challenge in this context, resulting in a decreased number of young people and also less structured youth ministry in this denomination. Academic youth ministry has viewed youth as consumers of theology rather than people who help construct religious discourse resulting in youth becoming the subjects of ministry and not partners in theological discussions within congregations. As a result, youth are dependent on others for their faith formation and do not take responsibility for their faith. The research question; what, if any, factors hinder and enhance the faith development of young people within the EBCOSA was investigated. Secondary questions included: What is meant by faith formation as related to fourteen to seventeen year old youth? How can ecclesial, familial and societal relationships enhance or hinder this formation?

A research study on what faith formation is and how it is reflected in the life of this age group seemed most adequate in addressing this challenge. Faith development theory was prioritized in the empirical study because it focuses on how people's faith is formed and influenced at different life stages and because an understanding of where the youth in the EBCOSA are positioned would assist in understanding and planning for its faith formation processes.

### 7.1.2 Reflection the research objectives

This research study set out describing research objectives as a map for the researcher and also the readers of a dissertation. These objectives correlate with the theoretical framework of this dissertation. The research objectives of this dissertation were accomplished through:

- Answering the descriptive- empirical question of practical theological interpretation: What is going on? This was accomplished by conducting a contextual analysis of the EBCOSA as a denomination.
- Answering the interpretive question of practical theological interpretation: Why is this going on? This was done by conducting an interdisciplinary theoretical study on faith formation.
- Conducting an empirical study with the youth and its leadership within the EBCOSA. The research process involved in conducting this study was discussed addressing the second part of the descriptive-empirical task.
- Discussing the research findings discovered adding value to the interpretive task.
- Answering the normative question of practical theological interpretation: What ought to be going on? This was done by comparing this research study to three similar one in order to gain ethical norms and models of good practice appropriate for the EBCOSA. The findings thereof assisted in developing a practical theology on youth faith formation from an evangelical South African perspective.
- Answering the pragmatic question of practical theological interpretation: How can the EBCOSA proceed from here on? This was done by looking for strategies of action that will assist the EBCOSA in achieving its desired goals for its youth ministry. This objective reflects on the practical suggestions made during the empirical study and also practical strategies from tasks one, two and three above.

## 7.2 Plan for the dissemination of the research results of this study

Research cannot be done in isolation from relationships and academic discussions. Thus, to empower people and contribute to dynamic academic discussion through continued research; efforts will be made to share the findings of this study at local churches (starting with the EBCOSA) in the form of workshops or talks, community forums and focus groups with youth and their families. The researcher will present the findings of this research study in at least two articles to be published in academic journals and will present these as papers at academic societies and institutions. The first thereof will be shared at the International Association for study of youth ministry in London in January 2015. This will help communities of faith improve the way they do theology but it also respects that these communities are already actively doing theology and have been for decades. We cannot afford to build theological approaches around a commitment to praxis without finding ways theologically to help communities of faith correlate their own efforts at faithfulness with the ways God's spirit is present and active in our world (Fowler in Schweitzer & Van der Ven 1999:89).

## 7.3 Conclusion

This research study focussed on the faith formation youth between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years old within the EBCOSA. This denomination is positioned within a post-apartheid South African context.

Chapter one served as the mind-map of this dissertation by introducing the research theme of this research study and contextualising it within the South African state of youth development. This chapter discussed the researcher's personal and academic motivations for conducting this research study. It has described the research problem of this dissertation and stated the research question anticipated in this research study. The theoretical framework of practical theological interpretation aligned with four specific tasks has guided the researcher in stipulating the purpose of the research study under five core objectives. A qualitative research design in which the EBCOSA was the focused case was selected. Empirical research was conducted through using interviews and focus groups as its core methodology. The theological nature of this research study as part of youth ministry within practical theology and also the delimitations of this research study were discussed. The chapter concluded with an overview of the chapters of the dissertation and key terms relevant to this study.

Chapter two was a contextual analysis of the EBCOSA asking the question; what is going on. This chapter discussed the history of the EBCOSA as a denomination within the context of how Christianity has developed in South Africa. It has briefly reflected on the impact South African history has had (colonization, apartheid and post-apartheid) on the South African church and as such on the EBCOSA. The influence of TEAM on the EBCOSA's denominational structure, governance and theological framework was discussed. This theological framework included the theological language the EBCOSA uses through reflecting on key concepts used to describe faith development. A brief reflection on the state of youth in South Africa was deemed necessary when considering youth ministry in the EBCOSA. Youth ministry in this denomination has not taken the faith formation of its youth seriously. This was evidenced in how youth ministry along with its structures and leadership has been neglected.

Chapter three explored varying theoretical perspectives on faith formation of which faith development is one, in an attempt to answer the question: why this is going on in the EBCOSA as far as the faith formation of its fourteen to seventeen year olds are concerned. This chapter discussed the findings from a theoretical investigation on faith formation. Key terms relevant to faith formation were explored but not exhausted as each of these are considered foundational theological concepts with dynamic meanings dependant on the disciplines and contexts in which they have been used. Discipleship, spiritual growth and maturity and faith formation were discussed as these are relevant to understanding how faith formation is understood by theologians, sociologists and psychologists. Key developmental theories and also influential factors relevant to understanding faith from the perspective of 14-17 year old youth were discussed. This chapter concluded with a choice for the term spiritual growth as most relevant to the EBCOSA. An understanding of faith as a process toward spiritual growth was proposed.

Chapter four continued exploration into the descriptive- empirical task through describing the empirical process followed during the empirical study. The research problem and question navigated this process. The challenges the researcher faced during the empirical process was also discussed here. This chapter elaborated on the research design and methodology used in this study by explaining how the unit of analysis used was chosen.

Thematic analysis was used as the data analysis method for this study. Chapter four concluded by sharing a summary of the key findings of this study and a few outcomes thereof.

Chapter five discussed the research findings of this study through exploring the normative task of practical theological interpretation by asking what then ought to be going on within the EBCOSA. Specific evangelical Protestant theological traditions (images, concepts and narratives) within the field of practical theology were elaborated upon here. Relevant South African practical theologians were consulted towards a South African perspective. The implications of the findings of this research study were discussed on three levels; for the EBCOSA, for Practical theology and for youth ministry in South Africa.

Chapter six discussed the practical implications of this study through listing the various implications for the EBCOSA, Practical theology and also for youth ministry in South Africa. Recommendations to the EBCOSA, academics and practitioners of youth ministry in South Africa and to the discipline of practical theology have been made. The limitations of this study were also discussed in this chapter.

This research study concludes by defining faith as a process towards spiritual growth. Each of the research objectives set out for this study have been accomplished. The limitations and recommendations for further research reveal the personal growth process of the researcher and also the broadness of youth ministry as an academic discipline. The researcher has committed to sharing the findings of this study through workshops, community forums, focus groups, and through academic publications and presentations. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings of this study will serve as a resource to the EBCOSA and others in the field of youth ministry research.

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## ADDENDUM A: Ethical clearance certificate from the University of Stellenbosch



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### Approval Notice New Application

31-May-2012  
Weber, Shantelle SM

**Protocol #: DESC6/2012**  
**Title: Faith Development of Youth: An empirical and theoretical investigation**

Dear Mrs. Shantelle Weber,  
The **New Application** received on **08-Mar-2012**, was reviewed by Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Committee Review procedures on **02-Apr-2012** and has been approved.  
Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: **26-Apr-2012 -25-Apr-2013**

#### Present Committee Members:

Fouche, Magdalena MG  
Theron, Carl CC  
Mostert, Paul PJ  
Van Zyl, Gerhard G  
Hattingh, Johannes JP  
Bitzer, Elias EM  
Engelbrecht, Sidney SF  
De Villiers, Mare MRH  
Somhlaba, Ncebazakhe NZ  
Hansen, Leonard LD  
Van Wyk, Berte B

#### Standard provisions

1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

You may commence with your research with strict adherence to the abovementioned provisions and stipulations.

Please remember to use your **protocol number (DESC6/2012)** on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

#### After Ethical Review:

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required.

The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) number REC-050411-032.

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

### **Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval**

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Claudette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health ([healthres@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:healthres@pgwc.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health ([Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za](mailto:Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant parties. For approvals from the Western Cape Education Department, contact Dr AT Wyngaard ([awyngaar@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:awyngaar@pgwc.gov.za), Tel: 0214769272, Fax: 0865902282, <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>).

Institutional permission from academic institutions for students, staff & alumni. This institutional permission should be obtained before submitting an application for ethics clearance to the REC.

Please note that informed consent from participants can only be obtained after ethics approval has been granted. It is your responsibility as researcher to keep signed informed consent forms for inspection for the duration of the research.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at .

#### **Included Documents:**

DESC Checklist/Application form

**(REC COORDINATOR NOT DEFINED - CONTACT MODULE ADMINISTRATOR)**

**ADDENDUM B: TEAM confession and repentance of conformity to the apartheid philosophy.**

Statement on apartheid by TEAM Field Council

The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) repents of any and all conformity to apartheid, past or present. We deplore all such actions as unbiblical. We ask forgiveness for anytime that our missionaries have sinned in acquiescing to the patterns of the unjust and oppressive society of South Africa in the treatment of any peoples.

TEAM regards all people as made in the image of God and therefore of high worth and dignity to Him and to fellow human beings. Since all people are sinners, Christ loved them and died for them. Therefore, they can become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. As His children, they receive the privileges of heirs of God. All are one in Christ and one in the Body (Colossians 3:11).

TEAM rejects apartheid as heresy. It is a form of racial segregation that deprives people of equality and voting privileges in a representative government. While TEAM has had to conform to laws imposed by a government dominated by the apartheid philosophy, individual missionaries have resisted it.

One of the most serious results of living in a country dominated by apartheid has been the creation of separate denominations along racial lines. TEAM rejects this state of affairs and desires to promote multiracial Churches. Ephesians 2:14-16 states clearly that racial and cultural barriers have removed through the cross of Christ and should not exist in the Church. Therefore we will not establish separate churches exclusively for one cultural group.

TEAM is willing to work with all its associated denominations and encourages an operational unity. TEAM protests all division based on race because in the Body of Christ racial distinctions are not the controlling factor. We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body whether we be Jews or Greeks, bond or free (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13). As TEAM has encouraged multi-ethnic prayer meetings and retreats, it will encourage multi-ethnic churches.

Therefore, our stand is that we will not promote race to be the basis of Church as in apartheid society. TEAM will seek to develop spiritual oneness among everyone and encourage associated Churches toward unity through mutual planning.

TEAM prays that all people in southern Africa may be represented in a fair government where the free exercise of faith may not be impeded by discrimination. We hope and pray that greater political freedoms may abound in the new South Africa resulting in new opportunities to plant reproducing Churches.

**ADDENDUM C:** Letter from Mr. Adam Johannesen to the National Council and Annual Conference; calling for the inclusion of a framework or guidelines for youth ministry in the EBCOSA Constitution.

PO Box 27583

Bertsham

2013

15 December 2011

Evangelical Bible Church

National Council & Annual Conference

The Secretary

**Inclusion of a Framework or Guidelines for Youth Ministry in EBCOSA Constitution**

Dear Brothers in Christ, it is with a deep sense of concern that I write to you about the above matter.

I have read through our church's constitution and see nowhere any clause, guideline or framework for youth ministry! Is this not perhaps the reason for none involvement of our youth in all of our churches? Could NC and/or AC select a group of young pastors and other Christian workers male and female who previously work in youth ministry to draft a framework and/or Guidelines that can be included as an Addendum or Annexure to our Constitution?

I trust that my concern about this matter receives the same attention from National Council and Annual Conference as all other matters that affect our church's growth. Note that I am willing be part of the group that NC and/or AC may select to start with the work of compiling this draft should NC and /or AC find this matter to be pertinent to the growth of our church.

Sincerely



Adam Johannesen

Elder Eldorado Park EBC

**ADDENDUM D:** Letter from Rev. A Jacobs and L Saville – Recommendations for youth ministry

Dear Pastors and Church Boards,

As part of its three year plan the National Council has mandated us (Pastors A. Jacobs and L. Saville) to offer you a number of recommendations regarding Children and Youth Ministries. We trust that the following list of recommendations will be helpful as we endeavour to build up and enhance these ministries throughout our denomination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that all children and youth workers in EBC receive some type of formal theological instruction. We further recommend that they register for the specific children and youth modules at the Evangelical Bible College via the distance- learning programme. These are:

a.	Children’s Ministry Modules	Credits
	Building the Biblical Worldview of the Learner	6
	The Biblical Worldview of Christian Education	10
	Renewing the Heart of the Sunday School Teacher	3
	Understanding Children’s Ministry	6
	Helping a Community care for its Children	8
	Connecting with Children	12
	Walking with Wounded Children	10
	Practical Children’s Ministry 1	14
b.	Youth Ministry Modules	Credits
	Introduction to Youth Ministry	6
	Strategy for Youth Ministry	6
	Youth Ministry Outreach	10
	Building depth in Youth	12

Youth Ministry Missions	8
Equipping Youth to Minister	12
Practical Youth Ministry 1	12
Leading with Purpose	6

2. We recommend that church leaders apply a more careful and biblical approach when appointing youth and children's leaders. A policy document that contains an appointment procedure, which includes qualification criteria like Christian character, spiritual gifts, maturity, training, etc., may be helpful for each local church to have.

3. Youth leaders should be encouraged or mandated perhaps to attend winter school. Here special lectures could be taught in order to address specific youth related issues. These sessions can run simultaneously with the main Winter School sessions. This could also provide an opportunity for youth leaders to encourage one another, strategize, and pray together about youth ministry nationally. Here national initiatives like camps and outreaches like short-term missions could be planned and finalised.

4. We set up a national "Youth Help Line". Pastors Jacobs and Saville (possibly others) could be the two men to man this help line. This will serve as a counselling and prayer support for parents, pastors, youth, and youth leaders in any situation and on any youth related issue.

5. We develop and establish a national resource centre for both children and youth ministries. As the name suggests the centre will contain resources like books, programmes, electronic media, magazines, journals, etc. that may be of use to youth and children's workers in EBC.

Yours in Christ

Anton A. Jacobs and Llewellyn Saville

(On behalf of the National Council)

**ADDENDUM E: List of EBCOSA congregations<sup>120</sup>**



*Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa*

Region	93	Pastor	Contact Details		Telephone Number
			Pastor	Church	
Eastern Cape (4)	Booyens Park	Edgar Petersen			
	East London	Brendon Buckley			
	Pacaltdorp / George	David Saunders			
	Schauderville	Brandon Oliveria			
Gauteng (13)	Bosmont	Anton Jacobs			
	Calvary / ZakPark	Frank Shayi			
	Eersterust	Marlin Sanders			
	Eldorado Park	Nolan Thompson			
	Ennerdale	Neville January			
	Florida	Anthony Hartze			
	Noordgesig	Stephen Andrew			
	Pescodía (Kimberley)	Warren Theys			
	Reiger Park	Lesley Johnson			
	Riverlea	Basil Meyers			
	Southern Suburbs	Terence Martin			
	Westbury	Anthony Marais			
	Windmill Park	Lienken Rabie			
Kwa-Zulu Natal (7)	Eastwood	Peter-Jon Thompson			
	Eshowe	Neels Mienies			
	Mariannridge	Llewellyn Saville			
	Richards Bay	Steven Gaines			
	Sparks Estate	Kurt Mentor			
	Wentworth	Herbert Collings			
	Woodlands	Keenan Hill			
Swaziland (2)	Manzini				
	Nhlangano				
Western Cape (9)	Atlantis				
	Beacon Valley	Conway Adonis			
	Bonteheuvel	Jimmy Jansen			
	Evbicol	Warren Abels			
	Grassy Park	Peter Serelina			
	Greenhaven	H Raymond Mentor			
	London Village	Daniel Square			
	Mitchells Plain	William Betha			
	Newfield	William Quantoi			
Zimbabwe (2)	Strandfontein				
	Glenwood / Kwe-Kwe	Mervyn Matthews			
	Mbizo	Peter Tadeyo			
SA - 33					
Southern - 37					

No pastor      No youth min      No young people      young people- no youth min      youth min      Not applicable

<sup>120</sup> Personal contact details have been removed to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. These are available from the researcher, if necessary.

**ADDENDUM F:** Letter of permission obtained from the EBCOSA for being used as the case study.

## *Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa*

### National Council

*"Your servants for His sake"*



**Chairman: Rev. HR Mentor**  
PO Box 54608, Strandfontein, 7788  
Ph. 021 394 9000  
Email: [hmentor@mweb.co.za](mailto:hmentor@mweb.co.za)

**Secretary: Rev. NL January**  
18 First Avenue, Extension 3, Ennerdale, 1830  
Ph: 011 855-8464 Cell: 083 344 9163  
Email: [njanuary@mtloaded.co.za](mailto:njanuary@mtloaded.co.za)  
[njanuary@vodamail.co.za](mailto:njanuary@vodamail.co.za)

January 7, 2012

Mrs S Weber

Dear Shantelle,

**Re: Your request for permission to do the youth research project in EBCOSA**

Warm greetings in the Name of our Lord.

I hereby advise you that National Council discussed your request at length and agreed to grant you permission to proceed with your project. Please note that NC expressed interest in the final product of your research.

I enclosed an extract of the latest statistics of churches that submitted on time as well as an updated directory to assist in your project.

Regards,

Pastor Neville L January

**ADDENDUM I:** Letter requesting permission to conduct this research study (to the EBCOSA).

65 Tobruk link

Strandfontein

Cape Town

7787

15 December 2011

To the National Council of the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa

**Re: Permission to conduct research study on youth ministry in EBCOSA**

My name is Shantelle Weber. I am currently doing my doctoral studies at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch. The theme/title of my dissertation is: *Faith Development of youth: An empirical and theoretical investigation within the EBCOSA*. My research question is: What, if any, contributing factors hinder the faith development of young people within the EBCOSA?

Interest in doing this study has stemmed from both personal and academic motivations. The academic interest in this subject has progressively developed from frequent verbal concern from church, parents and youth that has arisen when being actively involved in ministry to youth. It has been a fast growing concern that many young people have visited the church and experienced personal conversion but have struggled to grow and mature in their faith because they are not getting the necessary support from influential structures in their lives. I have chosen EBCOSA as context because it was from here that my initial interest and concern developed.

The purpose of this research study is to explore whether faith development is considered important to fourteen to seventeen year old teenagers and also what contributing factors hinder or enhance this development. It also hopes to empower denominational structures to assist healthy faith development of its youth. EBCOSA will be used as a specific and focussed case in this regard.

This research study is aimed at doing a theoretical and empirical investigation into the faith development of fourteen to seventeen year old youth within EBCOSA context.

My objectives would be to:

- Conduct a theoretical study on the history and current youth ministry in EBCOSA and also on faith development of 14-17 years old teenagers
- Conduct an empirical study in the form of interviews and focus groups in EBCOSA.
- Document research findings with the aim of developing a practical theology on youth faith development from an evangelical South African perspective

My research plan:

I am approaching the empirical part of my study, in which I hope to conduct interviews and focus groups within EBCOSA. According to Reverend Neville January's correspondence; EBCOSA has 37 operative congregations of which 33 are in South Africa. These are then further divided into: 7 in Kwa-Zulu Natal, 4 in Eastern Cape, 1 in Kimberley, 12 in Gauteng and 9 in Western Cape. I would like to conduct interviews and focus groups with youth (14-17 years old) and church leaders in 10 of the 33 congregations.

**Interviews:** Interviews would be with 3 youth, 1 pastor and 1 youth or other church leader per congregation, resulting in 5 people being interviewed. That would mean 30 youth, 10 pastors and 10 youth/church leaders being interviewed nationally. This would be for the duration of 60 minutes each.

**Focus groups:** 1 focus group per congregation would be conducted. This group will be comprised of 3 youth who have not been interviewed, 1 pastor and 1 youth or other church leader, resulting in 5 people per focus group. That would mean 10 focus groups conducted nationally. This would be for the duration of 60 minutes each.

The focus group is aimed at the participants having an opportunity to be debriefed on theoretical research done and also hearing different voices on the topic.

**Selection:**

*Congregations:* 5 of these congregations are chosen because they currently have an active youth ministry and the other 5 are chosen because they have youth attending but no active youth ministry. I have sent out an email to and contacted pastors telephonically to ascertain the above. You will notice that I have chosen a third of the national population group (congregations). I will also choose a third of the national population group. This then means that the amount of congregations chosen per region would be: 2 in Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1 in Eastern Cape, 4 in Gauteng and 3 in Western Cape. The final names would be selected according to a random sample. This means that all the names of the congregations who have reported having an active youth ministry would be placed in a bowl of which the first 5 would be chosen. The same would be done with those not having an active youth ministry assuming there are 6 or more. If they are 5 or less all those will be included in the sample and the difference would incorporate the active youth ministry group.

*Participants:* I would like to request that the selected congregational boards decide who the youth or possible church leader would be. At least 1 of the 3 youth in each instance (interview or focus group) must be of the opposite gender. For example, if you are selecting 2 boys the other must be a girl or vice versa. If there is no youth leader but a youth committee, 1 member of that committee can be selected or otherwise a church leader.

Consent forms will be given to each participant and also each parent/guardian of the youth. Each participant chosen has the right to decline as this is voluntary. No payment will be made to participants. No costs will be incurred by any participant as I will travel to each respective congregation. Findings of this study will be made available to all participants in the form of workshops or focus groups and also a letter. Participants and also EBCOSA will also have access to a copy of the final dissertation.

I hereby request your permission to use EBCOSA as the focused case of my doctoral research. If this permission is granted, the empirical study (interviews and focus groups) will commence in March/April 2012 after ethical clearance from the University has been obtained (interview schedule attached). All pastors of the selected congregations will be contacted prior to commencement. A list of the selected congregations as well as the final draft of my research proposal will be forwarded to Rev. January before your next meeting at conference 2011.

I trust that the information given in this letter is sufficient enough to grant the necessary permission.

Yours faithfully,

Shantelle



**ADDENDUM J:** Letter of progress of research study sent to the EBCOSA

5 March 2013

To the secretary of the National Council of the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa  
(EBCOSA)

Re: Progress of PhD studies

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I trust that this letter has found each of you well.

I would hereby like to notify the national council that I have completed all interviews and focus groups in 8 (Bosmont, Eldorado Park, Windmill Park, Woodlands, Marianridge, Shauderville, Grassy Park and Bonteheuwel) of the chosen 10 congregations selected at the beginning of my empirical study. Unfortunately, Riverlea and Mitchells Plain EBC could not accommodate me due to pastor Meyers and aunty Sheila Betha being ill. I am currently conducting the analysis of these interviews with the aim of completing the full written thesis by June 2013. This will then go through a process of editing and review before submission for examination later this year.

I am also in the process of applying for funding so that I will be able to return to the different regions in 2014 to workshop all the findings as promised. Please pray that these applications will be successful.

Yours faithfully in service for Christ.

Shantelle

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shantelle', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

**ADDENDUM K:** Comparison of first and revised questionnaires used (prior to and after the pilot study)

Initial youth questionnaire (07/03/12)

Participant no: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Category:

Youth	Youth leader	Pastor	Church leader
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Gender:

Male	Female
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Question 1

Are you a member or adherent of EBCOSA?

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Question 2

If yes, how long have you been a member?

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Question 3

How regularly do you attend church?

- a) Once or twice a month
- b) Every week
- c) Not often

Question 4

Do you attend:

Youth group	Prayer meetings	Bible study	Other christian activiies
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Question 5

What is your understanding of being a christian?

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Question 6

Are you a christian?

---

Question 7

What is your understanding of faith development?

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Question 8

When you hear the words faith development, which words come to mind:

Spiritual growth	Spiritual maturity	Discipleship	Growing in your faith
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Question 9

Do you think you are developing in your faith?

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Question 10

What would you say are some of the contributing factors in developing your faith? (Name at least 3)

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Question 11

Explain why you have listed these?

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Question 12

Would you say these factors are unique to 14-17 years olds? Why?

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Question 13

On a scale of 1-3 (with 3 as the highest) which factor affects your faith your faith development most?

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Question 14

What would you say would help you develop your faith?

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Any other comments?

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Venue: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**

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Revised youth questionnaire (16/03/12)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant no: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Category:

Youth	Youth leader	Pastor	Church leader
-------	--------------	--------	---------------

Gender:

Male	Female
------	--------

Question 1

Are you a member or adherent of EBCOSA?

---

Question 2

If yes, how long have you been a member?

---

Question 3

How regularly do you attend church?

- a) Once or twice a month
- b) Every week
- c) Not often

Has this been by choice or out of obligation?

Question 4

Do you attend:

Youth group	Prayer meetings	Bible study	Other christian activities	None
-------------	-----------------	-------------	----------------------------	------

Question 5

What is your understanding of being a christian?

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Question 6

Are you a christian?

---

Question 7

What is your understanding of faith development?

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Question 8

When you hear the words faith development, which words come to mind:

Spiritual growth	Spiritual maturity	Discipleship	Growing in your faith
------------------	--------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Question 9

Do you think you are developing in your faith?

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Question 10

What would you say are some of the contributing factors in developing your faith? (Name at least 3)

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Question 11

Would you say these factors are unique to 14-17 years olds? Why?

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Question 12

On a scale of 1-3 (with 3 as the highest) which factor affects your faith your faith development most?

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Question 13

What would you say would help you develop your faith?

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Question 15

What would you say hinders (make it difficult) your faith development?

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Question 16

On a scale of 1-3 (with 3 as the highest) which would rate as the most influential?

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Any other comments/ Suggestions?

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Duration of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**

### Initial adult questionnaire (08/03/12)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant no: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Category:

Youth	Youth leader	Pastor	Church leader
-------	--------------	--------	---------------

Gender:

Male	Female
------	--------

#### Question 1

Are you a member or adherent of EBCOSA?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Question 2

If yes, how long have you been a member?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Question 3

What has your past experience of youth ministry in EBCOSA been?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Question 4

What has been the impact thereof?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Question 5

What is your present experience of youth ministry in EBCOSA?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Question 6

What has been the impact thereof?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Question 7

What is your understanding of faith development?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Question 8

When you hear the words faith development, which words come to mind:

Spiritual growth	Spiritual maturity	Discipleship	Growing in your faith
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Question 9

Do you think the young people (14-17 yrs old) of EBCOSA are developing in their faith? Why?/Why not?

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Question 10

What would you say are some of the contributing factors in developing one's faith? (Name at least 3)

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Question 11

Explain why you have listed these?

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Question 12

On a scale of 1-3 (with 3 as the highest) which factor affects your faith your faith development most?

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Question 13

Has EBCOSA been involved in developing the faith of these young people? Why?/ Why not?

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Question 14

What would you say could be put in place by the denomination?

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Any other comments?

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**

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Revised adult questionnaire (16/03/12)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant no: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Category:

Youth	Youth leader	Pastor	Church leader
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Gender:

Male	Female
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Question 1

Are you a member or adherent of EBCOSA?

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Question 2

If yes, how long have you been a member?

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Question 3

What has your past experience of youth ministry in EBCOSA been?

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Question 4

What has been the impact thereof?

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Question 5

What is your present experience of youth ministry in EBCOSA?

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Question 6

What has been the impact thereof?

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Question 7

When you hear the words faith development, which words come to mind:

Spiritual growth	Spiritual maturity	Discipleship	Growing in your faith
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Question 8

What is your understanding of faith development?

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Question 9

Do you think the young people (14-17 yrs old) of EBCOSA are developing in their faith? Why?/Why not?

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Question 10

What would you say are some of the contributing factors in developing one's faith? (Name at least 3)

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Question 11

Explain why you have listed these?

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Question 12

On a scale of 1-3 (with 3 as the highest) which factor affects faith development most?

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Question 13

What would you say hinders the faith development of young people? Why?

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Question 14

On a scale of 1-3 (with 3 as highest) which factor would you say is most influential?

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Question 15

Has EBCOSA been involved in developing the faith of these young people? Why?/ Why not?

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Question 16

What would you say could be put in place by the denomination?

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Any other comments/suggestions?

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Duration of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**

**ADDENDUM L: Comparison of first and revised focus group procedure (prior to and after the pilot study)**

**Format of interviews:**

Introductory comments (explaining procedure)	10 min
Conducting interview	45 min
Closing remarks	5 min

**Procedure for conducting interviews:**

1. Consent forms for parents/guardians to sign sent prior to interview through the youth leader/pastor
2. Introduce myself (researcher) & thank interviewee for availing themselves
3. Confirm language to be used
4. Explain and fill in consent forms – special mention of confidentiality clause, length of interview, use of tape recorder and permission to use words (quotes)
5. This is a structured interview where a set of questions has been decided on before the interview and only these questions are asked in the interview. This type of interview resembles a questionnaire, except that the researcher personally asks the questions.
6. Interviews are conducted with an open mindset, no prejudice against the interviewee.
7. Personal notes will be made during the interview

**Initial focus group questionnaire**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Focus group no: \_\_\_\_\_

Group composition:

Youth	Youth leader	Pastor	Church leader
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Gender :

Male	Female
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Question1

What would you say influences the faith development of 14-17 years old youth?

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Question 2

Explain why you have listed these?

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Question 3

The issue of \_\_\_\_\_ came up quite often in the individual interviews, would you like to discuss this?

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Question 4

What can churches do to develop the faith of its youth?

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**

**Revised focus group format:**

Introductory comments (explaining procedure)	10 min
Conducting interview: informal discussion (interviewer served as facilitator) around theme discovered during interviews	45 min
Closing remarks	5 min

**ADDENDUM M:** Information leaflet used during pilot study focus group

Focus group with the Evangelical Bible Church of Southern Africa (participants)

*Debrief on concepts related or relevant to faith development*

EBCOSA Context:

**1. Foundational beliefs:**

- One can only be reconciled to God through faith (Ryrie: 1986:294)
- This faith is evidenced in a holy life and also through works before men (1986: 298-300)

**2. Definitions/Understandings of faith:**

- Faith is (1986:326- 327):
  - Confidence in God's salvific work to remove sins;
  - Reliance on God
  - A channel & not a source
- Saving faith – “reliance on truth of the Gospel as revealed in God's Word” (1986:327)

**3. Components of faith:**

- Intellectual – knowing about God
  - Emotional – feeling connected to God
  - Volitional – act of believing
- } all needed to have saving faith

**4. Terms used related/ relevant to faith development:**

4.1 Spiritual maturity (Ryrie: 1986: 375- 380):

- Being able to (1) discern God's will and perspective; (2) prayer according to this will; (3) exercise your spiritual gifts and (4) war against powers of faith.
  - Not based on time you have been saved
  - There are stages of maturity – never fully mature
- } Continue to mature
- Role of Holy Spirit - “...fullness of the Spirit is key...” (375) - control yielded to Holy Spirit
  - Christlikeness – reflecting fruit of Spirit (Gal 5: 22- 23) in daily life experiences and circumstances – expression of praise, inner attitude of worship, life of worship and submissiveness in relationships (parent/child or husband/wife or slave/master)

